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THE
INHABITANTS OF EARTH;
OR,
THE FOLLIES OF WOMAN.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY
ANTHONY FREDERICK HOLSTEIN,

AUTHOR OF

SIR OWEN GLENDOWR; LOVE, MYSTERY, & MISERY; THE
ASSASSIN OF ST. GLENROY; THE MISERIES
OF AN HEIRESS, &c.

Thou smiling queen of every writer's breast,
Indulgent Fancy! from the fruitful banks
Of Avon, whence thy rosy fingers cull
Fresh flowers and dews to sprinkle on the turf
Where Shakespeare lies, be present: and with thee
Let Fiction come, upon her vagrant wings,
Wafting ten thousand colours through the air,
Which, by the glances of her magic eye,
She blends and shifts at will, through countless forms,
Her wild creation!

AKENSIDE.

VOL. III.

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THE
INHABITANTS OF EARTH.

CHAP. I.

Not faster yonder rowers' might,
 Flings from their oars the spray,
Not faster yonder rippling bright,
That tracks the shallop's course in light,
 Melts in the lake away ;
Than men from memory erase
The benefits of former days.

SCOTT'S LADY OF THE LAKE.

The Trial of Friendship.

THE mind of Florence had received a very severe shock in the sudden and awful death of her father ; but to this was now added the certainty, that his repeated warn-

ings of approaching poverty, in the event of his decease, had been no phantom reared by imagination, as she had heretofore firmly believed, to fright her to the goal of matrimony. She recollected, with increasing alarm, his frequent declaration that she would, under such circumstances, not only be friendless, but also what she now fearfully realized, literally penniless.

To provide for her own future maintenance seemed now her only resource ; but how was this to be attempted by a being so unfitted, from past indulgence, to the arduous task? Her proud, independent, and aspiring mind revolted at the thought ; but reason, or necessity, a still more arbitrary tutor, pointed to that as the only road ; but unable at the present trying moment to bend to circumstance, she determined to seek her friend, Matilda Dacre, to counsel with, and at the same time accept a temporary loan of money, until her pecuniary affairs had undergone a proper investigation.

The

The funeral of Mr. Vincent had been solemnized ten days ; the heavy affliction, the shock of his death, had, in some degree, subsided ; and the respectful mourning in which his daughter was arrayed, with the saddened air of mitigated and mellowed grief which her features wore, gave her that touching interest which is at once so impressive and captivating.

She drew a large bonnet over her face, and as the distance was beyond a walk, entered, for the first time in her life, a hackney-coach, and, unattended by a single servant, drove to the door of Mrs. Dacre.

That lady was absent, but her daughter was visible. Florence, therefore, with trembling step, ascended the stairs : the contrast of present circumstance, with the remembrance of the last time of their meeting under the roof which now received her, affected her sensibly, and unbidden tears gushed from her eyes ; she wiped the traces from her cheeks, and, with assumed fortitude, entered the room.

Matilda was seated on a sofa, playing with a tame squirrel, which frolicked alternately upon her shoulder, or hid himself beneath the folds of her dress. She started from her recumbent attitude, but did not rise at the approach of her friend: her manner was cold, constrained, distant, but civil, as she pointed to a chair, and requested her to be seated. The request was not ill-timed, for the limbs of Florence were palsied with astonishment: she was unprepared for this first lesson in the school of adversity, and, without uttering a syllable, accepted the invitation.

Miss Dacre commenced by adverting, with perfect frigidity, to the late melancholy event, and in the same tone added—“ Indeed I was dreadfully shocked when Mrs. Wilson, your old housekeeper, announced to me her discharge from your service, by applying for a similar situation with us; but indeed there was so little economy practised in your domestic establishment, and with such a constant succession

sion of visitors, as I have witnessed at Trent Abbey, so much more than was proper must have been committed to her management and discretion, that a prudent family would certainly decline engaging with a housekeeper who had been accustomed to such lavish expenditure. From her, however, for curiosity, or rather the great interest I felt in your welfare, induced me to admit her, I learnt all the particulars of your present distress, and that your expensive propensities, added to the unfortunate extravagance of your late father, had united to beggar you; and in short, from what I could gather, that you were left under such awkward circumstances, as must compel your personal practice of industry for a maintenance. Now as I have ever had a very great friendship for you, Miss Vincent, I shall be happy to be serviceable to you, in any mode of life you may adopt; and when you have fixed upon that you mean to pursue, you will not omit to afford me the opportunity of

evincing the interest I take in your affairs ; in the interim, accept this trifle ; it will reimburse you for the expence you have inadvertently incurred by the hackney-coach, which I presume waits for you ;” and the fair Matilda deliberately took a guinea from her purse, which she extended at arm’s length to her astonished auditor.

Happily for Florence, the cool insult had aroused indignation, rather than awakened feeling : her eyes were fixed upon the speaker, with a meaning which required not language to render intelligible ; she rose from her chair, and at a moment when she would have given such a reply to the foregoing address, as time could scarcely have effaced from the mind of her ungrateful, unworthy associate, the one was saved from the mortification of well-merited expressions of chilling contempt, and the other the regret of having discovered how deeply she had felt the unlooked-for humiliation which had so unnecessarily been prepared for her, by the door being again
thrown

thrown open by a servant, who announced two other visitors.

Miss Dacre, as if conscious of the reprieve, and grateful for its *apropos* interruption, rose with alacrity, and greeted, with renovated vivacity, their arrival, without deigning, or perhaps daring to bestow a single glance upon our orphan, who, at the same moment quitting the apartment, descended unobserved, and unattended too, and gained the street, where, at some little distance from the hall door, she beheld her humble vehicle drawn off to give place to the dashing barouche which had conveyed the present guests of Miss Dacre.

Melancholy was the interval which passed between her departure from one house and arrival at the other, that other which she had in such cavalier manner been desired so recently to quit; but where was she now to look for succour, support, or even advice? Her mind, distracted by a succession of evils, sought, with infantine help-

B 4

lessness,

lessness, some bosom on which to repose : 'tis true, " the world was before her where to choose ;" but alas ! in that wide space, where was this inconsiderate child of Folly to seek, or seeking, find one real friend ?

Reflection, with rapid glance, reviewed the past. One object presented itself still with smiling aspect : Mrs. Hertford had been the early *protégée* of lady Emily Vincent, who had rescued her from the miseries inflicted by a severe and unfeeling stepmother, had educated, maintained, and eventually been the means of marrying her very advantageously to an eminent counsellor. Florence caught indeed at the precious anchor ; she remembered, with renovated hope, the tender attachment which Maria Roberts had always professed, her even blameable indulgence of all her whims and caprices in her childish days ; and she now felt assured that Mrs. Hertford would recognize the deserted orphan of her benefactress, with all that maternal fondness
which

which had, in former days of peace and happiness, marked the conduct of Maria Roberts towards her.

Elate with expectation of kindness and hospitality, succour and protection, our heroine felt her heart relieved of part of its weight of woe, and she immediately sought among her papers for the address of this late recollected friend; it proved to be at Peckham; and as delay, under present circumstances, was not admissible, she determined the very next day to visit her.

Sleepless was the night which ensued; and at an early hour she arose to prepare for the intended interview. The hints the unfeeling Miss Dacre had thrown out for economy, dwelt with painful tenacity upon the mind of our unfortunate; but a coach could not now be avoided; it was no longer an indulgence; nor could a dirty hack prove otherwise than a mortification; but it was indispensable; and she once more ascended one, and directed its course to Peckham. Time had scarcely reached the breakfast-

hour of even the early risers of Mrs. Hertford's family, when the carriage stopt; without ceremony she alighted, and followed the servant almost to the door of the apartment, where they were just assembled, when turning with some appearance of surprise at her lack of form, he begged to be honoured with her name.

The mind of Florence had, as usual, outstript ordinary bounds; and, but for this gentle rebuke, she had rushed, unconscious of the singularity of her conduct, even to the very bosom of her whom her imagination had pictured, during her short journey, as the condescendant playfellow of her infant sport, the grateful object of her mother's bounty. She was recalled to present circumstance by the inquiry of the servant, and taking a card from her pocket, desired him to deliver that—he received it, and entered the room.

“Where is dear Miss Vincent?” exclaimed the well-remembered accents of her friend; and at the next moment she
was

was folded in affectionate embrace to the bosom of Mrs. Hertford.

This tender greeting, so consonant to the mental predictions of Florence, so soothing to her heart, so gratifying to her feelings, overcame her altogether, and bursting into tears, her head fell upon the shoulder of her friend, who, with tenderest inquiry, led her into the room, where sat her husband, and five of their children. His reception was no less kind and cordial, while, to banish remembrance of what appeared so much to agitate their guest, William, Edward, and their infant sisters, were pressed on her notice. Florence endeavoured to aid their wishes for recovered composure; and in a short time so well succeeded, as to take her seat at the table, and partake of the breakfast spread before her. Hospitality appeared to reign supreme: Mr. Hertford hoped she would continue with them as long as suited her convenience and inclination; and the friendly Maria was too happy to find ex-

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pressions.

pressions of sufficient force to pourtray it. The full heart of Florence now swelled with gratitude to the benevolent Hertfords; and she bitterly reproached herself for the frequent neglect she had manifested towards them, by procrastinated answers to the many affectionate letters she had been in the habit for years past of receiving from them, and for that indifference with which she had so long regarded them.

She thankfully accepted their offer of present accommodation, though she reserved to herself the period to which it should be lengthened, being fully determined not to lead a life of dependence even upon her who had for so many years been an object of bounty in the house of her parents; but satisfied of their interest in her welfare, and personal attachment to herself, she had made up her mind to be wholly regulated by their advice and direction as to her future destination; she therefore dispatched a note to the mistress of the house she had quitted, signifying that

that she had no intention of returning to it, but should, in the course of the following day, remove all she could now call her own from under her protection.

Having finished her task, Florence sent her note to the post-office, and dismissing, as an incumbent duty, as much as circumstances and her own sensibility would permit, the recent awful bereavement she deplored, from her mind and conversation, she entered, with deepest interest, into the little domestic details of Mrs. Hertford; she heard, with truest satisfaction, of her husband's rapid advance in his profession, of his acknowledged abilities, and growing practice, of the daily fees of office, of the large sums which rewarded his eloquence; and, looking at the youthful claimants who crowded his table, she joyed at the prospect of independence it held to their perspective, while she felt, by experience, the bitterness attendant upon Poverty's hapless train.

Three days had glided serenely on—no
answer

answer had been received to the letter she had written respecting her piano-forte, her library, globes, and other valuables she had left in the ready-furnished house hired by her late father, a small trunk, containing chiefly her linen, being, as yet, all that had reached her; and, deeming it necessary that her friends, the Hertfords, should be made fully acquainted with every circumstance respecting her present situation, which could enable them the better to judge of what steps it would be necessary for her to pursue, for the recovery of whatever the harpies of the law may have left her, as well as with regard to the line of life she should adopt to secure a maintenance, she determined, on the following day, to commence the painful narrative of the past, which they had hitherto industriously evaded, lest the detail should too sensibly affect her mind.

As soon, therefore, as the breakfast-table had been dismissed, and the juniors of the family had quitted the room, poor Florence

rence commenced her sad tale, which when she had, with many tears, concluded, Mrs. Hertford again folded her to her bosom, wiped the traces of sorrow from her cheeks, and bade her banish all cares for the future; for that she trusted no untoward event would separate them; and smilingly added her hopes, that while she retained the name of Vincent, she would seek no other home.

The professions of the counsellor were scarcely less ardent; he regretted she had persisted in giving a detail which he already knew, and which knowledge he had indeed before signified, as a repetition could serve no other purpose than to harrow up her own feelings, and thereby distress those of her friends.

“ Ah, but, my dear friend,” replied the sobbing girl, “ unless I explain to you fully my situation, how can you be a competent judge of the plans it becomes necessary I should form for the future ?”

“ That,” returned Mr. Hertford, “ is, surely, my dear madam, a matter not of
6 present

present consequence. The valuables you have spoken of, as left at your house in Sackville-street, I will immediately secure for you by purchase; but this I cannot do, unless authorized by you; for the library, piano-forte, harp, globes, and things of that description, having been all understood to be the property of Mr. Vincent, are at this moment in possession of the creditors; but if you wish for those, in preference to replacing them by new, I will, without delay, exert myself for their possession, on your behalf; and as far as my professional services can be rendered useful to you, setting aside all other demands on my time, I will readily devote myself to the arrangement of your business; only, therefore, say where your commands will first direct my attention?"

"Alas! my friend," returned his weeping auditor, "how can I talk of purchases, who do not possess fifty pounds in the world?"

The lawyer started from his seat, while the hand of his wife relaxed of the firm hold with which she had for the last half hour

hour retained that of her dear Miss Vincent— “ Not possess fifty pounds in the world !” re-echoed Mr. Hertford; “ how is that possible, when the ample fortune of lady Fitz-Arnold, I well know, was bequeathed you some years ago? and this can be no mistake, for I received the information from her Ladyship’s own lips. Your father, I know, died insolvent; but that could not materially affect you, who held possessions of such magnitude from your aunt.”

“ Again, my dear sir, you, however, are mistaken,” resumed our heroine; “ I refused compliance with an earnestly-desired request of my respected relative; and the disappointment of sanguine expectation altered her intentions with regard to the disposal of her property, much to my disadvantage, though not intentionally so.”

“ It was certainly a very injudicious step on your part,” resumed Mr. Hertford, coldly, “ to make use of a very gentle term to
express

express my sentiments of your conduct, Miss Vincent."

"And yet I was wholly guided and governed by the most unerring monitor I could have consulted. You are not, perhaps, aware of the magnitude of the object in view, and that I must, by a compliance, have sacrificed my integrity, and have called upon the Supreme Being to have witnessed nothing less than perjury!"

"These, madam, believe me, are but flights of imagination: marriage, for I presume you allude to that, is now a ceremony which is so perfectly understood, that it is regulated, as it undoubtedly was originally intended to be, by human policy; it is a necessary link to connect the bonds of society, it preserves *nominal* hereditary claims to rank and fortune, and, as such, is an institution of considerable utility; but as to the antique idea of connecting "love, honour, and obedience" with the marriage-vow, we moderns wave them with as much

sang

sang froid as we do another similarly well-understood injunction of “forsaking all others, and cleaving only unto” that helpmate to whom chance, convenience, or parental influence may unite us. If the matter, however, be yet retrievable which will secure you,” he continued, with an expressive smile, “the fortune of lady Fitz-Arnold, even by that alliance you have in the plenitude of folly declined, instruct me in the means of attaining the object for you, and I by no means despair of compassing the end in view; for, be assured, the chimerical notions you have imbibed will very soon evaporate in air, when you are once impressed with the more substantial advantages which will arise from that mode of conduct I would influence.”

“Your theory, Mr. Hertford, is as revolting to my principles as your recommendation is to my practice; I grieve to discover we have each mistaken the other; to enter further into argument would be an useless trespass on your time, for I cannot

not flatter myself with the hope of rendering you a proselyte to my sentiments, and I feel assured there is no chance of my becoming a convert to yours. I can, therefore, only briefly thank you for the intended service you have volunteered, and decline it altogether: to this, however, suffer me to add my grateful acknowledgments for the hospitality and friendly attention I have experienced beneath your roof; and to assure you, that the most essential, as well as acceptable, service you can render me, will be to assist in forming some arrangements for my future disposal, in some way which will enable me to secure, by my own exertions, a decent maintenance."

The eyes of poor Florence overflowed with tears; her bosom heaved the sigh of anguish; but they were unheeded by either of her friends. Maria sat twisting, into a thousand shapes, a card of invitation she had just received, while her husband, coolly taking up a pen to mend, with the evident
intention

intention of employing his writing-desk, which lay open before him, simply expressed his readiness to serve her in any way she could point out ; but recommended the situation of governess in a private family as the most eligible, to which she was also competent, from her expensive, and consequently, he presumed, well-finished education.

Our hapless heroine recoiled from this advice with unconquerable reluctance ; too often had she witnessed the cruel and unnecessary insults and degradations to which such unfortunate female dependants were subjected, either from upstart pride, vulgar ignorance, or, what was still more grating to the feelings, the overbearing contumely of the sons and daughters of wealth—no, the situation of a governess was the last upon earth to which she could submit. Beside, Florence was now sensible that she was by no means calculated to fill such a situation, from other causes. Children were the delightful playthings of the hour, and
had

had ever been to her a considerable source of amusement, when, as mistress of Trent Abbey, she had for years been the benevolent patroness of infancy, as well as age, at a time when her juvenile village-throng were admitted one day in the week to partake at once of her bounty, in a well-supplied table, and her instruction and advice, which were regarded as sacred as the famed oracles of Delphos. But to curb wayward dispositions, to submit to receive commands, and obey directions where her own judgment condemned, or, perhaps, by her own sad experience, convinced was injurious to the future welfare of those committed to her charge, or to watch, with solicitude, over the tender osier, and, after bending the pliant twig to ideal perfection, to be, perhaps, severed from that on which she had lavished her store of affections, to give place to some new favourite, was a picture her imagination had sketched, and her vivid feelings rejected. What then was the alternative? alas! she knew not. Her
removal

removal from Mr. Hertford's house was indispensable, and must be immediate: she heard no more of those delightful schemes for the future which so recently employed the active mind of her friends; all now presented an insipidity of conversation, a constrained civility, which wounded her to the soul, and anything appeared better than her present situation.

Mr. Hertford had gone out, and our *tête-à-tête* friends were about retiring to dress for dinner, when a carriage stopt at the door. Florence rose to quit the room; but Maria suddenly stopt her—"Remain where you are; I see from the window who my visitor is, and I have a plan, which I am sure will succeed for a comfortable establishment for you—wait, and judge for yourself."

Lady Elizabeth Leslie was announced. Her ladyship looked surprised at the unexpected rencounter, and bowed with cold politeness.

"At the very moment of your entrance,
my

my dear lady Elizabeth," said Mrs. Hertford, at the first pause in conversation, "I had recalled to memory a hint you gave me some time since, of your desire for a sort of companion to amuse those lonely hours when the earl devotes you to the country, and deprives the world of its brightest ornament. Miss Vincent," she added, turning to her astonished friend, "is exactly the being you want; from birth and education a gentlewoman, she is suddenly reduced, by the folly of herself and father, to considerable pecuniary distress; and as circumstances compel her to a state of dependence, she will nowhere, I am convinced, feel the burthen so light as under the protection of your ladyship."

"My protection, dear Mrs. Hertford, would readily be extended not only to your recommendation, but to Miss Vincent as an old acquaintance, if I did not fear it might be the means of throwing her under the protection of another branch of my family; and that might be," she continued, with

with a laugh, at her own supposed wit, “very like the protection Rolla talks of which the wolf affords the lamb, though, I believe, it is not quite civil to liken poor Ferdinand to so rapacious an animal.”

“And your ladyship is equally unfortunate in your second simile,” returned Florence, with unusual asperity, “for I am in many respects quite as unlike the quiescent lamb that would meekly resign itself to the inhuman influence of a savage, whether of the woods, or what we have been taught to consider the more civilized circle of a court; and permit me, madam, also to add, that the style in which you have conveyed your recent consideration for me, fully convinces me from *what* quarter my apprehensions of insult could alone have arisen, if I had obtained your ladyship’s gracious permission to have entered the house of the earl of Trelawney; but as that is an arrangement which has never occurred to my imagination, discussion upon the subject

is as idle as unpleasant to me ;” and, rising from her seat with dignity and recovered self-possession, she quitted the room, and, with precipitated step, reached her own chamber. But here our heart-broken Florence no longer played the heroine; a burst of stifled feelings almost suffocated her; and finding relief in tears, she, for a time, resigned herself to their indulgence, till reflection convinced her exertion was necessary, and all that she had to rest on.

Without further deliberation she then began instantly to pack her scanty wardrobe; and having sent to the nearest inn for a carriage, she no sooner heard that lady Elizabeth Leslie had quitted the house, than she sought Mrs. Hertford, to whom she communicated her new arrangements, and, by way of apology for the suddenness of her movements, stated the necessity of her return to town, to ascertain the actual state of affairs in Sackville-street.

Her communication was received as a
matter

matter of course, and as if it had previously occupied the mind of Mrs. Hertford, who laughed at her folly in converting a friend into an enemy, by the severity of her retort to lady Elizabeth, whom she said all the world knew cared not a straw for her brother, otherwise than as the transmitter of family distinctions, the value of which it required no penetration to discover she estimated higher than any other earthly good ; and concluded by again condemning the conduct of Florence, as it was evident to her observation, that if lady Elizabeth had not feared the influence of her charms, the objection to her admission would never have arisen ; whereas, if she had acted wisely, she would have profited by the hint, have disclaimed all possibility of such a *denouement*, and having once gained a footing in the house, have then aimed all the artillery of beauty at the heart of *Ferdinand the savage* ; as it was, she had now only to lament the unhappy

irritability of her temper, endeavour to amend it, and seek some other situation, which, if not so pleasant, would probably be more secure from danger.

CHAP. II.

For not more close when dazzling lightnings glare,
Follows the thunder through the troubled air,
Than in the scene of life a cloud of woes
Bursts on our transient joys, and banishes repose.

HODGSON.

Humiliation, Reflection, and counteracted Industry.

FLORENCE regarded with astonishment the once-loved Maria of her mother's care; that being whom she had reared with tenderness, had rescued from the hands of tyranny, had educated, had treated with even maternal indulgence, and had aided to place in that very state of independence which had enabled her with impunity to

insult her orphaned child ! She heard her in indignant silence ; and, passing over what could not well be replied to by her, but in a strain she was disinclined to adopt, as they were so soon to part, and she hoped for ever, she turned from the sickening contemplation of human depravity, to what harmonized more with her own feelings, in the affectionate caresses of the infant group, who thronged around her, and in tears were alternately lamenting her departure, or in imploring her to stay, as she had promised them, and assist in decking their May-day garland, which they assured her would soon arrive.

In the midst of this scene of genuine nature, the chaise was announced. Mrs. Hertford slightly invited her to return until she could secure lodgings in town, as, of course, she concluded those would not be retained which she had before occupied ; and then added, how greatly Mr. Hertford regretted that indispensable business precluded the possibility of attending her, as he
would

would otherwise have done; but recommended accommodating matters with the woman in Sackville-street, whom, he was sorry to say, he was convinced meant to take every advantage of her; but as *the glorious uncertainty of the law* mutually exposed them to the danger of incurring considerable expence, and the issue could alone decide where it would eventually rest, it were better even to submit to palpable imposition, than by resistance involve herself further.

For once Florence agreed in opinion with her advisers; for as her dear friend, the lawyer, was not to reap the golden harvest he had expected, she believed these to be his genuine sentiments, and she felt assured they were her own.

The parting scene was civil, even polite; and the dejected orphan reached Sackville-street in safety at six o'clock. She was received by Mrs. Davis with expressions of pleasure, as she hoped she would immediately discharge a bill of a few trifling ex-

pences incurred by her on behalf of Miss Vincent, in the form of fees, and bribes to preserve, from indigent creditors, the remains of her unfortunate father by a private interment. The harp, library, piano-forte, and other such small matters, she had herself disposed of, and the sum, she assured her, which had been raised, had considerably assisted her in her humane exertions; and concluded by presenting the before-mentioned bill, which amounted to within ten guineas of the forlorn one's whole worldly possessions.

From this demand there was no appeal—the money was paid; and Florence having received that small remnant of her clothes which the rapacity of Mrs. Davis had spared her, was preparing to reascend the chaise, when the appalling recollection of whither she was to direct its course struck upon her heart as the knell of death. She paused: the expression of her speaking countenance struck the observation of the postillion; he inquired with earnestness what

what was the matter, and received, in tremulous accents, the real truth: the honest fellow appeared to feel for her sufferings, and asked her if she would wish a small lodging nearer the city? for, if so, he had an aunt who could accommodate her, though she was now too proud to acknowledge him as a relation. An assent was immediately given to the proposal, and they proceeded to the new lodgings.

To the inquiries of Mrs. Benson, the postillion gave the satisfactory information, that he had brought the young gentlewoman from squire Hertford's at Peckham, and that, to his belief, she was a kind of a poor niece, or a cousin, or something of that sort; but still that she had money enough to pay her for the present, for he had seen full a dozen golden guineas in her purse. This intelligence sufficed: Miss Vincent was admitted, and immediately took possession of her two apartments, having made an agreement to pay her weekly.

This important step taken, Florence now began to reflect in what way she could best employ her time: needle-work she knew but little of, and, at all events, she feared not being sufficiently acquainted with it to complete in such manner as to entitle her to consideration from those of whom she might seek employment. This seemed not likely to answer, therefore, her pursuit. Both music and drawing, she believed herself mistress of, although we fear vanity had here, as was usual with her, gone beyond the fact; but in order to teach those accomplishments, even if competent, a recommendation was necessary; and even yet she could not endure the thought of an appeal to those she had all her life considered as her equals, and without it this idea could not be pursued. A sort of forlorn hope rested on the possibility of her accomplishing another scheme. During the few days she had passed with Mrs. Hertford, she had busied herself in assisting the children to dress a leather doll; the query, therefore,

therefore, was whether she had ingenuity and perseverance enough to undertake a similar work upon a larger scale? of the latter she felt assured, and the former she decided to attempt.

Her plans decided, she took a late tea; and retired to bed, where exhausted nature recruited for the exertions of the following day. The white and delicate leather was purchased, her brushes, pencils, paint, and other materials; and, gratified with sanguine hope of success, she returned home, and instantly began her work: pleased with her progress, she scarcely allowed herself any cessation, until one was complete. She then recollected her knowledge of Chinese embroidery, which, as it happened to be at that moment fashionable, and the birth-day not very distant, she varied her employment by beginning some trimmings for the occasion, beautiful in design, and at length neatly and tastefully executed. Three weeks of indefatigable industry rewarded her labours, by the shewy exhibition she was now

able to make ; and, taking a specimen of each kind of her work, which she hung over her arm in a *ridicule*, set out on foot for a shop where she had seen some of those articles for sale ; and as she knew the wife of the man was employed by a court-dress maker, she hoped to obtain a purchaser for the other. The clouds threatened rain when she left home ; but ere she arrived, it began to fall ; and by the time she reached the shop, it poured in torrents ; nearly wet through, she yet consoled herself with insured success. Her specimens were approved ; the doll was beautiful ; the Chinese prettily fancied, and well finished ; and a bargain was soon made, if the whole answered to the samples given. Our new workwoman had found the materials very expensive, and the devotion of her whole time and attention she thought had not been sufficiently considered ; but she was necessitous, and her poverty consented.

Drenched with rain, weary, and not quite well, she retired to bed, and spent the

greater part of a long and tedious night in painful retrospect. The dawn of morning was now her signal for quitting her pillow; and having taken her solitary breakfast, she proceeded to put on her bonnet and cloak, in order to convey the rest of her work to the purchaser; but on opening the closet, where she had the day before placed the whole, what were the feelings of our luckless orphan, when she discovered that the heavy rain, which had fallen in the last twenty-four hours, had forced its way through a window she had carelessly left open, and that all her leather dolls, and the whole of her beautiful Chinese trimmings, lay buried in water! She gazed in speechless distress, for, independent of the loss of time and labour, the unfortunate girl had expended the greater part of her small remains of cash in the purchases she had made to form them.

To repine was folly; and, for once, she had wisdom enough to look rather to the attempt to repair an evil, produced by her accustomed

accustomed thoughtless inattention, than uselessly to lament it. Experience had now taught her that to commence her little plan of business, it would be more to her advantage to engage herself only as the maker of whatever they might employ her in, and not to be herself at any expence for the materials; she therefore proceeded as before intended, although with altered plans, to the shop in St. James's-street, where her first unfortunate traffic of merchandize was to have met a market.

Her tale of truth created only an incredulous smile. The master of the shop was, however, busy, and could not then attend to her proposals. She asked permission to call the next day, which being agreed to, she returned home. The next morning he was, however, still engaged—the next, and the next, were alike unavailing; when, despairing altogether of obtaining his attention to her proposals, she was just quitting it in despair, and with a resolution that, let what may happen, she

now

now never more would re-enter it, when he called out, in imperious tone, to know whether she could make such kind of ornaments, and childrens' toys, as he pointed out to her? Florence examined them, and answered in the affirmative. The agreement was then struck, and she thought it a far more liberal one than she could have hoped for; and, Mr. Freeman having given her wherewith to commence her new employ, she quitted the shop, and returned to her humble abode, with a less heavy heart than she had felt for months past.

CHAP. III.

Backward I turn, and when I view the past,
As on a livid lake I fix my eyes,
Gloomy, but troubled by no dangerous blast,
'The dull and lazy space behind me lies:
Before me spreads a drear and wintry waste,
And deeps unsounded, and o'erclouded skies.

BLAND.

Mortification, Disappointment, and Alarm.

WITH that part of the toys which she had completed, Florence prepared to take them to the shop where she had been employed, and obtain the materials for finishing those which remained of the order. A sort of latent pride, no pressure of poverty could wholly crush, caused her to delay her walk to his city shop in Fleet-street

street until the close-in of the day, since she shrank from a possible recognition of any of her former affluent associates in her present garb of humility; for adversity had had not yet bowed her mind to sustain those mortifications which exist but in the glass in which they are viewed, and would otherwise reflect solely on those unfeeling hearts that could bestow the passing smile of derision, or callous contempt, on the depressed child of sorrow.

As she reached the hall door, she met the mistress of her little lodging just issuing from a room on the ground floor, in a dress which evinced no errand of business carried her from home, for she beheld her decked in all her Sunday finery, and in buoyant spirits, and good humour, having, after a little domestic altercation, subdued the inclination of her more quiet and plodding helpmate, as not only to allow the dissipation of her attendance at a ball and rout given by Mrs. Tag, a shoemaker's wife, near Temple-bar, but to accompany her

her himself. So sweetly were all her feelings harmonized by this eventual concurrence of her husband, that Mrs. Benson became civil, if not kind in her expressions even to her poor lodger, and, with extreme condescension, inquired whither she was going, offering to set her down, if their road lay in the same direction, by giving her a lift in her carriage, which was added with an air of consequence, that evinced the importance she attached to even that convenient vehicle, a hackney-coach.

The toy-shop happened to be within a few doors of the route of the tradesman's wife; and Florence, with a sigh and flushed cheek, which evidenced the irrepressible struggle between pride and existing circumstance, accepted, with thanks, the offer of conveyance.

"But now," said Mrs. Benson, as Miss Vincent took her seat, "now I think of it, coachee will make us pay an extraordinary sixpence for stopping, and so you had better

ter

ter get out with us and walk on to the shop afterwards, unless you likes to pay the odd money yourself, and then I won't mind a few minutes lost time to oblige you, Miss."

With that impetuosity so natural to Florence, when aroused by real, or fancied indignity, or, at all events, of what, to her delicate and refined feelings, appeared so, although far from being conceived such by the plain and uninformed Mrs. Benson, Florence, the unhappy inconsiderate sport of capricious fortune, uttered a half-pronounced profession of her intention to defray the fare from her own purse: this was eagerly grasped at by her penurious host.

"Ah, Miss, and so you shall; and that will put all matters to rights; and so another time we will give you a ride without fee or reward, and we shall be squares again, for one good turn always deserves another, says I. And so, d'ye hear, master," added he, thrusting his head through a side window, "set us down at the three magpies in Fleet-street,

street, for our Miss, here, goes on a bit further."

Florence bowed assent, with an air that partook more of the imperiousness of her former self, than was suited to that sphere in which poverty now enrolled her.

"Lack-a-daisy me! only see how fine Miss bows to you, deary," cried Mrs. Benson, as she pulled her husband by the sleeve, to draw his attention within the coach; and then abruptly turning to the companion who sat by her side, continued—"I 's sure your father must have been a dancing-master—now b'ant I right? Aye, I knows what's what!" mistaking the silence of Florence for a confirmation of her inference. "And so he 'has taught you all the sandan-ges, and whirligigs, and whim-yhams of his dancing trade. Well, 'tis a lucky thing for you, mayhap, that he was a fiddle-scraper; for a thought has just popt into my head to serve you, which will be better than what you was going at in the way of work
to

to get your bread. I did think, a'ter the rout was over, to speak to Mr. Tag to let you have some of his shoe-binding to do, to keep your head above water. But I have now thought of a cleverer and genteeler thing to do you service, as you looks now but puny and poorly, as a body may say, with sitting all day long making them gim-cracks you have got in your hand ; so I've a mind to get you some scholars of our neighbours for you to teach to dance, and I dares to say you will get a better stomach for your victuals by jigging about with the young things : there now, there's Mrs. Griggins the tallow-chandler, near the new church, who says her little monkies have got such a turn for hopping upon one leg, and then upon t'other, that if they had justice done 'em, they would do for the grand what-ye-call-'ems at Astley's, by Blackfriars Bridge ; and yet her stingy husband won't let 'em learn at the young ladies' and gentlemens' 'cademy in Water-lane, tho' it is hard by ; but he says they

ask

ask a Bond-street price ; however, if you will do it cheap, I dares to say she would pay for it herself, for she has always the perquisite of the kitchen-stuff for pocket-money ; and if you take my advice, and will be but reasonable in your charge, I have got one or two more in my eye ; and then as I take all this trouble out of pure compassion to you, why you may teach my little Sam for nothing ; and what's more, I can give you a pair of nice kid shoes of poor Betsey Watkins, who died in your very room, just afore you comed to us, for I do think you are an honest sober kind of a body, and desarves to be encouraged, and moreover because I sees no followers, which, from your pretty face, I was afeard of at first."

" Well, well," interrupted the hitherto-silent husband, " to my thinking that will do better, for Miss looks fitterer for that there nonsense, and for chopping up gold paper all over the floor as she does, without mercy, than for work like Betsey Watkins,

kins, who used to take her pleasure, besides treating you and I, wife, to a tea-garden at Camden-town in the summer, aye, and payed for our riding a-top of the stage too on a Sunday ; and yet she always sent us our money honestly, and like a lady as she was, every week, as sure as the Saturday night came, and bought herself a new calico gown every quarter ; and yet she never worked half as much as you, Miss, for all I could ever see, for you spent three whole days clipping paper, to cover over little boxes that won't stand a shower of rain a'ter all."

Florence had, during this dialogue, thrown herself back in the carriage, where darkness had veiled her countenance from the observation of the Bensons, until a violent sob escaped her.

" Lack-a-daisy ! why you b'ant crying, Miss, be ye ? " screamed Mrs. Benson, in utter dismay. " Why, Lord, what's the matter now ? Cheer up, and mind what I say—I don't like, not I, to see people moping

moping when I am so happy; so I'll tell you some'at to comfort you, though Will charged me to say nothing about it for a day or two.—And do you know," she added, drawing near her with an air so elate as to evince the importance she attached to the discovery, "do you know you have got a sweetheart? aye, as sure as you be alive—you may tremble, and be in a frustration, for I likes to see a girl modest upon such occasions; but Willy Simpson, whose father is just dead, and let his son **step** into his shoes in the butter and cheese concern opposite to us, as I was a saying, why he has cast a sheep's eye at you, and so I've promised him to let you sometimes take a cup of tea with me in my back parlour, when the 'prentices be gone a' nights, and he may drop in, and so you may begin to keep company, and the like of that; and then, if you play your cards cleverly, why you may catch him out and out."

"Heavens! my dear madam," cried the now almost-suffocated Florence, "you have
not

not the desire—you surely cannot cruelly mean to insult my misery?”

“Lord love the poor girl!” resumed Mrs. Benson, with a loud laugh, “why what a little fool you be! you don’t believe I would encourage Willy Simpson, if I thought he’d bring you to misery? no, no, Willy is a gentleman, and will behave like one; and I dares to say, with a little of my management, would take you to church in a lawful way, for he has as good as told me so; for he said, says he, ‘If she had but a little money, I would think about her for a wife, for she has blue eyes, and that’s just my taste;’ now you know that’s great encouragement for a poor child like you.”

The coach stopping at this moment at the door of Mr. Tag, interrupted the further detail prepared by Mrs. Benson, who now busied herself in unpinning her gown, which had been carefully turned up, to avoid the possibility of being soiled; and, having drawn on her gloves, which had hitherto remained in her pocket from a similar apprehension,

prehension, they stepped out to join their party, and left our heroine in a flood of tears, whose bitterness can alone be felt by those who have experienced the cruel struggles between the mortification of humbled pride, a full sense of native superiority, and the conviction of extreme folly, by an indulgence of that acuteness of sensibility which had caused those feelings to be called into action.

Wholly occupied in these painful reflections, which were perhaps the unavoidable result of retrospection and present circumstances, arranged in contradistinction, our heroine was even yet regardless of that economy so necessary ; while Mrs. Benson, in the zenith of her gaiety, recollected in time to retain in her pocket, by manœuvre, the extra sixpence which she anticipated would be demanded for her proffered accommodation to her lodger, who was so far from profiting by her example, that she, without hesitation, ordered her guide of the whip, to proceed to the toy-repository in Fleet-street,

street, which was her original destination; but on her arrival she received, what was, under her circumstances, a shock of disappointment, in being told that Mr. Freeman was at his other repository at the west end of the town, as he never returned to that in Fleet-street after dinner.

Florence only thought of the necessity which urged her seeing him, to obtain more work, to raise an immediate supply of money; but feeling herself really ill, and now exhausted by mental suffering, she dared not attempt to walk to St. James's-street; and wholly unaccustomed to hackney-coaches, she did not consider that the fare of that she was now in would more than sweep away her most industrious labour for many days to come.

The coachman directed his horses by a circuitous route; but Florence remarked not the unfrequented and narrow lanes through which he drove, to avoid taking the more immediate road; and at length brought her out at the further end of St.

James's street; but here loud clamour and noisy acclamations banished, with electric force, that stupor which, within the last half hour, had succeeded to those painful emotions she had experienced from the well-meant, but ill-timed offers of the vulgar Mrs. Benson. She was soon aware that the tumult she now heard was more immediately in Piccadilly, as the sounds were evidently from that quarter; but her mind was at this moment too listless and wretched to feel either interest or curiosity from foreign cause; no inquiry was, therefore, made into the source of this seeming riot; nor did she indeed, after the first surprise, deem it more than a passing affray.

It was perfectly dark when the carriage arrived at its destination; but the answer that Mr. Freeman was at home, and to be spoken with, instantly animated her; and, relying upon her ability to walk back, she descended from the coach, having previously taken out her purse, and paid the driver of it his demand, with a carelessness

ness but too natural to her, and which habit had confirmed.

Having entered the shop, the little toys and fancy boxes were presented finished. Mr. Freeman, after examination, pronounced them to be tolerably executed; and desired her to bring the others, when he would pay her, as agreed upon, for them altogether. Miss Vincent then requested he would, as before, supply her with materials, if he wished for more, as she had exhausted all in her possession.

“No materials remaining!” exclaimed her astonished employer; “why I gave you more than enough for completing the whole lot for which I engaged you! Come, come, young woman, these tricks won’t pass; I have been fobbed off once before in this way; but I very well know that you mean to make a double market of me, and of the materials too; but this is too bare-faced a deception.”

“Deception!” cried the trembling Florence, half terrified and half irritated by

the boisterous manner of her accuser; "I have practised no deception; nor do I understand why I am thus insulted! I have cut and contrived the materials so as, with difficulty, to finish even those articles I have brought home——"

"Cut and contrived, indeed!" interrupted her noisy employer; "why you have cut it up rather too much, I think; and as to contrivance, it is the worst, for my pocket I ever met with; and I am sure here has been waste enough," he added, turning the moveable and metamorphiscal figures around, "so much paper lost on every side in the turning in! Well, I must say you are the most extravagant workwoman I ever had to do with!"

"There now, is it not, just as I said?" exclaimed the shrill voice of his little skeleton wife. "Didn't I say she was no better than she should be? and that she only came after the gentlemen that lounge here at our repository in a morning? for what does she care about economy? and
this

this is a proof of it ; for I never knew one of your handsome flaunting madams that was *not* wasteful and extravagant ; so pay her the money, and have nothing more to do with such a pert, saucy, wasteful baggage !”

“ Pay her the money indeed !” cried the man ; “ why I shall lose enough by her as it is ; for if I only reckon the gold, and the Morocco paper she has destroyed, or kept, they are worth more than all her work put together ; and so, young woman, if you have a mind to bring me them back, I will pay you for these here, though I never can employ you again.”

“ Indeed, indeed !” exclaimed Florence, whom the recollection of bitter distress had reduced to some command of temper, “ the last morsel of both paper and gold were spent upon this netting-box.”

But vain was all expostulation ; poor Florence was at first unbelieved, soon unattended to, her work was unpaid, and, in a fit of almost despair, she quitted the shop.

It was a dull, damp evening; there was a general moisture in the atmosphere, more chilling even than actual rain; the frame of Florence shuddered beneath the unusual exposure; the tears fell cold on her yet-colder cheek; her step was slow, and almost lifeless; no passing sound vibrated on her ear; all sense seemed confined to her heart; that was not mute, its severed pulse beat high, and every throb was fraught with anguish; her eyes were bent on the pavement, nor heeded the passing pedestrians, unconscious that she moved each pace nearer to Piccadilly, until she felt incommoded by increasing numbers, and that she was suddenly jostled into the middle of the street. The crowd now pressed thickly around her; the throng momentarily gained addition; and loud and vociferous exclamations, in every direction, burst on her ear, with the mingled sounds of "Freedom of Election! Parliamentary Reform! Clifford! Liberty! and Burdett for ever!" Still did the partizans of the
popular

popular hero of the throng, rush like a torrent towards his house, for it was on that memorable night when the public view was directed to the probable removal to the Tower of the temporary god of their idolatry, and to the light of the which a party of dragoons now appeared under arms, called out from apprehension of serious riot; the inflamed minds of the multitude were now wrought to desperation; they were assailed with alarming weapons; the name of "BORDER" sounded on her ears in every direction; the mob pressed forwards; and Florence, unable to resist the pressure, was carried on unresistingly, until a sudden opening of that body of the crowd by which she was inclosed induced her to attempt escape; but fatal was the endeavour; she fell beneath the feet of one of the horses; the dragoon dared not stop to aid her, even if inclination had favoured the appeal of humanity; and she must inevitably have been trampled to death by the mob, if a man had not at this moment,

at the imminent hazard of his life, caught her in his arms, with an expression of terror, which was converted into far greater indications of horror, distress, and agony, as he gazed on the face of her he held in his arms, which the light of those houses the mob had compelled to illuminate fully revealed to him.

Florence fixed her eyes, in speechless dread, a kind of convulsed alarm, on the features of him who bore her away from the scene of danger; her senses were imperfect; still his voice appeared to agitate her whole frame; and a vague uncertain impression, that it was Horace Bentinck who supported her, took possession of her wild and bewildered faculties; ere they fell into complete extinction.

CHAP. IV.

"How faint is language justly to impart,
The mix'd sensations which pervade my heart!
The irritated mind by sorrow worn,
By pain corroded, and by anguish torn,
Seeks to repose the weight on Friendship's breast,
And steal from sympathy a transient rest."

Man as he is, and Man as he may be.

UPON recovering recollection, Miss Vincent beheld herself resting on a sofa, in an extensive and well-furnished apartment, while two women were bending over her with restoratives. The idea of her having been succoured by Bentinck still pursued her; she turned her eyes around, with a
D 6 lingering

lingering hope, to be ascertained of the half-realized impression ; but as she did so, some one precipitately retreated from the back of her seat, and she just glimpsed the shadow of a man, as he abruptly disappeared through a door behind her. An exclamation, truly involuntary, a spontaneous effusion of ungoverned feeling, burst from her lips to stay his flight ; the effort, the sudden emotion, was more than her half-recruited strength could support : again her senses sunk in trembling debility ; yet still she looked towards the door through which he had disappeared ; and her countenance so eloquently spoke her distress, that one of the females near her hesitated not to follow him, for the purpose of conveying the conjectured information of the anxiety of the invalid for his return.

The inquiry visible on the countenance of Florence on her re-entrance, was again intelligible.

“ The gentleman is gone for a carriage, madam,

madam, and promises to return in a quarter of an hour with one to convey you home."

"Where then am I?" exclaimed the agitated girl.

"At the Gloucester coffee-house," was the laconic reply.

"A coffee-house! and by whom was I brought here?" she tremblingly rejoined.

"You certainly, madam, are not yet recovered, or you would, undoubtedly, not ask that question," replied one of the women. "Pray take a little more of this sal-volatile. The person who brought you here must be some very dear friend, with whom you are well acquainted, for I am sure his distress at your situation was very violent; but as to my informing you who he is, why that is pretty well out of the question, for we have too many as elegant and handsome gentlemen as he is, who frequent our house every day, to render the sight of this one a matter of such consequence to us."

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The manner of the speaker gave weight to her words ; and it was evident no favourable impression of the invalid had found entrance in her mind.

The apprehensions of poor Florence heightened, as she now knew herself to be in a coffee-house, doubtless frequented by gay, fashionable, and dissipated young men. The faint pulses of her heart quickened, as she harboured a cruel idea, that he who, as an honourable lover, she had treated with such unlicensed tyranny, and disingenuous coquetry, had now, perhaps, imbibed the harrowing thought, that poverty, subduing the pride and arrogance of her character, might throw her into his arms, the victim of venal love.

A consciousness that she neither deserved kindness, respect, nor even esteem from him, strengthened this horrid impression, to which the timidity of nerves, so recently debilitated by illness and terror, united with the oblique recently uttered by the woman who had assisted her, had
given

given origin; and she now felt only anxious to quit the house before his return; she therefore took out her purse to offer compensation for the aid which had been afforded her, and requested to have a carriage immediately called.

The purse was safe, but alas! its contents were not equal to what our poor heroine expected; for on defraying the fare of the last coach, instead of a shilling, she had accidentally given, among the silver, the only guinea she possessed on earth; and with tenfold cause for real anguish at the discovery of her own carelessness and inattention, as they had been productive of a mistake pregnant with consequences so serious to her, nor had she now even the trifling means to discharge, as she wished, the debt so recently incurred.

Lost in the most painful rumination, she sat for some minutes unable to move; but after the lapse of some little time, during which she had been left entirely alone, a waiter entered, and placed a chair, as he

was followed up the stairs by a gentleman.

The strength of Florence seemed in a moment electrically marshalled to her aid, as she started from her seat, to absent herself, she knew not whither; but the attempt was unavailing—the dreaded visitor was already before her; yet she saw no more than the general outline of his figure, for objects swam before her sight; she stretched out her hand to grasp the arm of the sofa for support, but he intercepted the attempt, as his arms involuntarily afforded that assistance she needed; and her head, from debility, sunk upon his shoulder; nor had she even courage to raise her eyes to those of the injured, ill-treated, lover of those imperious days, when Affluence was the nurse of all her follies. No lips pressed her pallid cheek, no expression of love issued from her supporter; but his arm trembled as it encircled her waist; and a sigh, deep and mournful, alone broke the noiseless silence.

& Gently

Gently the stranger raised her drooping head ; and tones of well-known interest struck on the ear of the agitated girl : she started ; her eyes, by quick involuntary impulse, turned on the speaker ; and she beheld, not the object of her former coquetry, but the being of whose good opinion she had been most jealous, even in her vainest hours, Leslie, the amiable, the estimable Leslie, whose countenance teemed with benevolence, interest, and affection ; but not that affection which, glowing with the ardency of impassioned love, overpowers the fallen and depressed female, who feels herself dependent on the honour of her preserver, but that chastened and refined affection, which unites in itself all the nobler sentiments of humanity ; and Florence, who, at this moment of embarrassment, would have shrank with alarm and apprehension from encountering the passionate and ever-ungoverned Bentinck, experienced at this interview how inseparable confidence is from gratitude, when
due

due to one whose character had ever drawn forth esteem and respect.

No convulsive sob heaved the bosom of the unfortunate girl; yet her tears flowed; the surprise, if not the disappointment, was great; for, in love, the heart often wishes what it fears.

Anxious to learn the means of relieving the sufferings of the orphan, the voice and manner of lord Leslie yet evinced that apprehension of wounding her feelings, which proved the delicacy and generosity of his own. The desperate state of Mr. Vincent's affairs had not been unknown to his lordship; many months before his death, he had been made acquainted with it from accidental circumstance, unnecessary here to recount; and it was this knowledge that induced him to urge the immediate election of Florence in favour of major Bentinck: he was too penetrating an observer of the human heart, not to perceive her genuine attachment for his friend; but the jealous disposition of Horace convinced

vinced him, that if the poverty of Florence were displayed, and he believed himself accepted as a mere convenience, domestic doubt, and suspicion, terminating in endless misery, would be the result.

At the period of Mr. Vincent's death, his lordship was making a desultory tour in the north; nor heard of that event, until after the removal of his daughter to her obscure lodging with the Bensons. In vain had he sought to discover her new residence, and yet indefatigable had been the endeavour; for Leslie took an interest in all that concerned poor Florence, which he had assured himself had arisen from the first viewing her as the object nearest connected with the happiness of his friend, since he had been the confidential associate of major Bentinck, and knew all the mad idolatry of his love for Miss Vincent: but Horace, like a very lover, after having fully determined that the future misery or felicity of his life rested on her becoming his wife, taxed the friendship of lord Leslie,

to analyze her character, form his judgment thereon, and bestow his advice on the occasion; by which he professed his intention to be regulated. Ferdinand was, indeed, no superficial observer; he saw, with the piercing vision of impartial scrutiny, that, as the apparent idol of wealth, surrounded by female sycophants, and male admirers, Florence would never become a domestic being, nor a husband's love constitute the summit of her wishes and desires; yet he knew sufficient of the character of Ben-tinck, to be also convinced that his jealous and suspicious temper would revolt at the idea of accepting, in adversity, the woman who had insolently discarded him in the prosperous halcyon days of affluence; yet was it in adversity alone that the vanity of this capricious girl could meet its final overthrow; it was in adversity that Florence could learn coquetry were impotent.

This erring young woman must pass a cruel, a fiery ordeal, ere yet she could become purified from those faults and foibles that

that crowded round her heart; but her virtues, divested of the incumbrance, might eventually reflect distinction and honour on the female character.

Reasons, however, such as these, were powerless of effect on the passionate, irrational Horace, had the attempt been made; and, indeed, ere he became his confidant, Leslie beheld the honour of his friend so deeply involved by attentions, and involuntary professions, that he could not conceive him authorized to withdraw for any length of time, even if his own interest were materially concerned in delay. And, having thus accounted for the past, we must now resume the present, and proceed to the future.

Florence now began to perceive all the necessity of an explanation of that situation from which she believed herself, at this time, to have been extricated by lord Leslie, instead of Bentinck, as she had at first supposed; for her senses were in too imperfect a state, at the moment of peril, to
be

be ascertained who her deliverer really was: her whole appearance, on foot, and unattended at such an hour, evinced but too palpably her present reduced finances, to admit the possibility of concealing the wretched truth; nor could she disguise the sorrow it had entailed, if she would: her pale dejected countenance, her thin, emaciated and weakened frame, her mournful and despondent voice, all spoke the genuine child of Misery.

Tears filled the eyes of lord Leslie; a tenderness, deep and heartfelt, touched his fine manly countenance with all the benevolence of love; while his manner had, in its attentions, that respectful address, which was best calculated to inspire the confidence of our unfortunate.

It was long since the voice of friendship had reached poor Florence, since interest, affection, or sympathy, had cheered her drooping spirits; their effects were, consequently, deeply felt in an ever-grateful and susceptible bosom; yet the blush of
latent

latent lingering pride gave some faint reflection of former vivid bloom to her cheeks, as she deemed it indispensibly necessary to relate the errand which had compelled her abroad on this night of turbulence and civil discord.

An involuntary expression of indignation and reprehension now burst, unbidden, from the lips of lord Leslie, at the conduct of that parent who had, to enable himself to revel in all the extravagant and corruptive vices of fashionable life, entailed upon his hapless orphan the miseries of even abject want: and the language of Ferdinand, as he thus almost unconsciously animadverted aloud, had the spontaneous warmth, and nervous force, of one who was, 'in feeling, no common enthusiast. Delicacy, however, checked, in a degree, the mode of his expressions.

“ Oh spare him this severe censure ! ” returned the mournful voice of Florence ;
“ he was still a kind, indulgent father, and I shared with him in all the, alas ! too pernicious

cious luxuries of life ! he warned me of the present era, he predicted all the fatal effects of my wild, ungoverned folly ; but I turned from parental counsel with rebellious disobedience ; and when he wished me to avert the approaching evil, by a rational election, in which my heart could have had an unfettered preference, I treated his affectionate remonstrances and kind expostulations with derision, and if not with contempt, at least with disregard ; and I deserve, indeed I do, all the punishment inflicted !”

The hand of Florence had been taken, with tender interest, by that of Leslie as she had spoken ; and she felt the tears of this sympathizing friend fall upon it, as he drew it towards his heart. His own trembled—he suddenly released hers from within it, and averted his eyes from the contemplation of the poor self-condemned culprit ; for that countenance had, for him, far more subduing charms of beauty, when touched by the pensive interest of penitent

tent resignation to misfortune, than when its Hebe coquettish wiles had flourished in all the bloom of triumphant beauty.

A few months previous, and Florence had felt a full exultation of vanity, at the very evident emotion she had excited in the breast of the noble and exalted Leslie; but now how different was its effect, when, instead of animating, it wholly overcame her spirits! and she was so sensibly affected by this appearance of interest in her miserable fate, that, with a renewed burst of tears, she involuntarily exclaimed—"And is there yet left one friend who can regret and lament the early sorrows of the idle, the thoughtless, and the dissipated Florence Vincent? alas! I thought no kind remembrance of former associates was ever more to illumine my dark and cheerless prospects!"

"Gracious God!" exclaimed Leslie, "and have you, amid the group of past intimates, sought, and found not a single one ready to succour and assist her, who

was so lately the admired, adulated, and flattered companion of their gayer hours, the model they so oft have professed to imitate?"

A hectic flush crossed the cheek of the unhappy girl, and bore with it some native impetuosity of wounded feeling, as past indignity from the summer herd of her sunny days of prosperity crowded painfully on her heart; and the strength of her tones was heightened, as in quickened accent she replied—" Ah, all have deserted me! many have added insult to neglect; nay, even Matilda Dacre was most cruel and unkind, she who was the first, and the dearest of my friends, save one, and that one——" Florence hesitated. " I wished not—Ellen Bertie—would else perhaps——" Again she paused.

" I understand you," returned Leslie in a softened tone, and the most delicate manner he could command. " To apply to her for protection *now*, might be awkward and embarrassing——" And he paused.

This

This fatal confirmation of the recent report from the lips of Bentinck's confidential friend, fell with a condensed chill on the heart of Florence.

The eyes of Ferdinand had fixed upon her as he had spoken; but his survey was not the impertinent gaze of unfeeling curiosity; it seemed rather to proceed from a wish to judge, by present effect, how far he might proceed with the theme.

A silence, truly painful on both sides, succeeded, during which, Florence trembled violently; and although she experienced the sensation of suffocation, yet retained the full possession of her senses, without any return of that faintness Leslie feared to recall. His lordship at length, however, resumed—"I feel a satisfaction, my sweet friend, in perceiving that I am not the first to break to you the intelligence of an approaching union, between her of whom we have just spoken, and that Horace Bentinck I once was so desirous should have entered the nuptial pale with
E 2 yourself;

yourself; pardon me if I err in entering on the theme; believe me, I should not have presumed to have done so, if he had not himself commissioned me with the delivery of a letter, and I was anxious you should be aware of its probable contents before you opened it, for I have reason to imagine they relate to his recently-formed matrimonial engagements with Miss Bertie."

Lord Leslie placed the letter beside the agitated girl, to spare her the pain and embarrassment of receiving it more immediately from his hands; and, rising, approached a window, where, throwing back the curtain, he evinced his intention of remaining, until Florence had perused it. As this indicated a desire that she should do so at the present moment, our orphan summoned all her resolution to comply; and, with a heart that Bentinck could as yet have claimed as all his own, read the following lines:—

"SUFFER,

“ SUFFER, madam, the approach of inquiries after your health, injured, I fear, by the recent alarm you have sustained, although they be traced by the pen of a once-ardent admirer, and a yet sincere and deeply-interested, though discarded friend. That I was the happy instrument, selected by Heaven to snatch a life so valued from inevitable destruction, I humbly bow in grateful thankfulness; and shall ever remember, with mixed emotions of indefinable feeling, that my arm has been exerted to save you from peril, and ward off threatened danger, from her who will ever live in memory’s record ! This unexpected rencounter has called into action those sentiments of regard, which were once more vivid, but which, time and circumstance have, you will believe, mellowed and subdued, even to that temperament you so kindly wished them, a proof of which will shortly be unequivocally given to yourself, to the world, by the nuptial tie which unites my fate with that of the

estimable Ellen Bertie. From past events, long since, perhaps, forgotten by you, and only from the present moments recalled to recollection, you would, I fear, reject from me that friendly offer of aid my heart bounds to yield you; and a mistaken delicacy, I am but too well assured, would operate in a similar way, if tendered by your old friend, when considered as my future wife; but no fastidious phantom can arise, when my anxiety for your welfare points to my respected aunt, Mrs. Bentinck. Suffer me then, dear Miss Vincent, to place you beneath her roof. As I am not honoured with your confidence, I know not how far I may be presuming on your indulgence; for, as yet, circumstance alone, and general report, guide my disinterested appeal to your understanding, under such impression as I have imbibed of possible pecuniary disappointments: suffer then my intention to remove those inconveniences which may in consequence arise, if my information and conjecture be well founded,

founded, and let it plead in extenuation of the liberty which might otherwise be deemed unlicensed and obtrusive. My friend, lord Leslie, will take charge of any reply or commands with which you may honour him, who is, with every sentiment of respect, dear madam, your most devoted friend,

“HORACE BENTINCK.”

The perusal of the letter concluded, the eyes of Florence still rested on its characters; and deep was the wound its contents inflicted on her heart: something, however, of mournful reproach, wholly distinct from haughty indignation, dwelt therein; it was not that she now viewed the former conduct of Bentinck with anger, and deemed herself aggrieved by his precipitate transfer of, at least, his professions to another—no, Miss Vincent could now reason far more dispassionately on the subject; she could make allowance for the fiery ebullition of an irritated, outraged spirit,

that, feeling itself aggrieved, flew to revenge in very desperation. That he should treat her with coldness, indifference, nay even contempt, as Florence Vincent, the pampered idol of luxury, the spoiled beauty of an adulating world, was what she, indeed, richly deserved; and by the exact equilibrium of inflexible justice, amply merited that he should still pursue the same line of conduct; but yet, to a bosom alive to the nicer susceptibilities of feeling, one governed by the finer, softer influence of sensibility, there is a secret voice that intuitively whispers, Mercy is the angel that should preside over the political justice of humanity; and although, in a moment of acute recollection of injury, even the noble and generous may yield to the impulse of resentment, yet can it, in such a character, never be implacable; the misfortunes of even an enemy must soften all the passionate ferocity of revenge; and, in this case, the sword would drop from the hastily uplifted hand of the avenger, when he be-
holds

holds an already-fallen victim. Had, therefore, Bentinck dwelt less on the memory of past indignity, had his language breathed more the tenderness of disappointment, rather than its rancour, the mournful wrongs of one, who pitied while he condemned the aggressor, Florence would have been not only more deeply affected with contrition for her former conduct, but also more painfully overwhelmed in the miseries of being forsaken, upon a conviction of her unworthy treatment; for with her consequent estimation of the individual, his loss would have been the more severely felt. Even at such a moment of deepest distress, mercenary motive, or any regret connected with that source, could not take root in the breast of our orphan; it was the dereliction of him who had been the early choice of her heart, whose urbanity had pleased, and whose devoted attention had flattered, and not the neglect of the certainty of having averted the evils of poverty, by an union with that wealthy

E 5

lover,

lover, who now had turned to another and a kinder mistress, which caused the deep-felt regret that preyed upon her mind for past event, or now overwhelmed the dejected Florence, who, absorbed in the calamitous review of all her follies and errors, observed not that lord Leslie had resumed his seat on the sofa, and was equally abstracted as herself.

The waiter, however, at length entering to inquire if they wished to order supper, reminded each of the necessity to quit the hotel; and Florence hastily rising, his lordship ventured to solicit permission to attend her home. This offer was hesitatingly accepted by our orphan, since she felt the necessity of protection, on a night so fraught with terror and alarm to the immediate spot in which she had to proceed from; and now unable to defray the fare of a carriage, she was compelled to walk home; and while thus circumstanced, her weak and exhausted frame needed support to reach her humble lodgings.

Ferdinand,

Ferdinand, in silence, handed her down the stairs, where she encountered one of the women who had afforded her assistance when she fainted, and, feeling the necessity of some remuneration for the trouble she had occasioned, took her purse, almost her last shilling, which she gave her; but how much more distressed would she have been, if she had known that they had looked to her companion for compensation, and had already received an ample one from his hands, while the pert chambermaid, with a significant smile, contemptuously pocketed the silver, and considered the offering but a shabby recompence on her part.

At the door Florence found a carriage; it was a private one, and she rightly concluded it was his lordship's own; but to enter it from the door of an inn, even to her unreflective mind, appeared to border on impropriety, and she drew back, with that embarrassed reluctance which required an explanation; yet she felt awkward to at-

tempt one—she hesitated, essayed to speak, and then abruptly stopt.

“ Pardon me, my dear friend,” said lord Leslie, leading her forward; “ at any other time I would not thus persist in what you discover reluctance to acquiesce in; but so great is the danger from the increasing mob, and the military, who are now called out on duty, that I will myself take the reins.”

Expostulation was now a vain attempt; and, indeed, Florence saw the delicate consideration of his lordship, in ascending the box, instead of entering the carriage with her, which arrangement had evidently arisen from her embarrassment and confusion, at the untoward accident which had thrown her into a situation, at least equivocal in the eyes of those few by whom she had been surrounded; and as she marked these delicate and respectful proofs of attention from Leslie, she could not forbear a mental contrast between his character
and

and that of Bentinck, when rationally compared; and she felt that if Leslie had been placed in his situation, he would have shewn more of the tenderness of mercy, and less of unbending justice.

By a circuitous rout, again to avoid the hostile scene of civil discord, the carriage proceeded, and in safety reached the house of Mr. Benson.

Lord Leslie opened the door himself, and handed her out, as the sincere prayers of a faithful friend were registered for her health and happiness.

CHAP. V.

Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in her head.

SHAKESPEARE.

Suspicion, Love, and Poverty.

THE mind of Florence momentarily felt as if a welcome ray of sunshine had illumined its now almost habitual gloom, in believing that she had regained some apparent influence, at least, over the feelings of one valued friend of former days, but more particularly of him who, in her most frivolous hours and giddy pursuits, had ever been an object of both respect and esteem. Her temper was now mellowed by adversity,

6 sity,

sity, softened and refined. The necessity of self-exertion had awakened that dormant reason which had slumbered beneath the enervating reign of luxury; it had subdued, in no inconsiderable degree, her vanity, a leading foible of her character, from which many of her faults had arisen; for it had brought the full conviction of her own trifling importance, when stript of adventitious support; and that the fluttering ephemera, whose adulation had been so highly prized, were but the worthless appendages of wealth, whose minds attached to that universal loadstone, self-interest, were incapable of those softer refinements of which her own was susceptible; for poor Florence had, indeed, learned to suffer, and that in the most bitter school of self-reproach.

If this change of character be deemed unnaturally precipitate, let it be remembered, that in minds of strong sensibility, there is always a quick and rapid transition of feeling; they are never slow in their operations,

operations, for they act as they are acted upon, acutely, promptly, without that deliberate progression which appertains to those whose reason is gradually awakened, without the heart being deeply affected.

Exhaustion of strength, fatigue, and enervation, brought this night to poor Florence one kind and welcome friend in sleep, the most infallible restorer of the human frame, when debilitated by illness and affliction.

The fatal letter from Bentinck had, by forcibly reviving the recollection of himself and his new-formed engagements, produced a sudden shock on her mind; but she had long renounced every idea of a claim upon his affections; and from having accustomed herself to contemplate the effects of her own folly, as a just penance for past errors, she had insensibly brought her heart, although it could not be reconciled to the painful impression, yet to familiarize the idea of Horace becoming the husband of another; and this it was that now rendered her able to support the last
most

most conclusive testimony of so cruel an event.

Compelled also to activity of mind, and constant exertion of thought for the means of obtaining the absolute necessities of existence, Florence had less time to brood over the hapless termination of a first attachment. How dreadful is that moment when we awaken to misery, after sleep has, for a time, chased its empire over the mind ! how painful that instant when thought rushes back, seizing on the faculties with all her dark and gloomy train !

Alas ! this short suspension of care had but recruited the frame of Florence to sustain more of anguish, while it had rendered her yet more alive to mental torture, as it again returned to harrow up her imagination.

She rose, and, having dressed herself, repaired to the small sitting-room adjoining her chamber, to breakfast. The servant soon brought in the humble tray and tea-kettle, which, having placed for her use, she

she again quitted the apartment, without the reflecting Florence having been even sensible she had entered it. At length the unfortunate girl approached a little closet, the only repository of her stores, and took down from its shelf the slender remains of its contents. The canister yet contained tea, which the frugal Mrs. Benson would, by the exertion of patience in waiting its drawing, have made do, at least, double the duty our poor orphan exacted from it. The extravagance and expensive habits of her disposition had now no room to display themselves in a larger field; they, therefore, forced their way unconsciously into trifles; and the canister was entirely emptied, while the wretched girl knew not where to gain another meal.

Unused to such fare as now presented itself in the remains of the crust of a dry loaf of bread, the delicate appetite of the hitherto-pampered victim of luxury rejected the unpalatable morsel; and a cup of tea was all that had passed her lips, as with-

out

out ceremony, and a degree of even more than her usual assurance, the officious Mrs. Benson entered the room.

“ Bless me ! at breakfast at this hour ? a fine workwoman truly ! much business you’ll do in a day ; but that’s nothing to me ; only I likes to give people advice, and the like of that, let ’em be as bad as they may ; I do my duty by ’em, whether it does ’em service or not ; but that’s neither here nor there. I am come to talk to you roundly about what happened yesterday.”

The reference to what happened yesterday, Miss Vincent conceived could only allude to the hints respecting her thrifty lover, Will Simpson, at the butter and cheese shop. Without waiting to hear more, she therefore impatiently interrupted Mrs. Benson, with the assurance—“ That although she was much obliged by her, doubtless, kind intentions, yet that as they could never be carried into effect, she should be still further indebted to her to dismiss from the mind of Mr. Simpson all idea of her as
his

his wife, since that situation, for which he destined her, she was by no means qualified to fill."

"A wife indeed! wait, Miss, till you are asked; and that, to my mind, will be long enough first. What, do you think that Will wou'd have you now? no—honest tradesmen hold up their heads above lords' mistresses, and that sort of vermin, I promise you; no, no, I will be answerable for it that Will Simpson would scoff at you now, with all your beauty and fine pretences to gentility. I told my husband, when you paid for the coach as took us to Mrs. Tag's rout, that it had but a baddish look to see people, who work for their bread, throw away their money after other people's pleasure; but "light come, light go." Aye, you may well look astonished, and all in a heap of confusion; for I know all that happened last night, as I was observing: Molly, our maid, told me of your ranti-pole doings, coming home with a fine gentleman at the Lord knows what hour, taking
advantage

advantage of Johnny and I being absent at the ball, and how he looked, as if he could have eat you up with his eyes, and how you let him squeeze your hand, aye, and kiss you too, for what I know to the contrary; and how the servant, all over gold lace, and crinckem cranckam thing-'em-bobs hanging down in long strings from his shoulders, called him my lord, when he asked him where the carriage was to drive. Aye, I know it all, and a great deal more; and so, my fine madam, you may 'pack off, for you shan't disgrace and bring a bad name upon John Benson's honest roof; cutting up paper, and chopping pasteboard to atoms, and painting up dolls faces for a livelihood—a very likely story, to be sure, and I such a fool as to believe it. Troop, I say, hussey, and never let me see your deceitful face again; and so as you paid up to last night, I shan't charge you for the odd hours a'terwards; for bad got money wouldn't do us no good; and I'm sure you have got no other to give."

And

And thus concluding her harangue, Mrs. Benson, casting a look of contempt upon her terrified lodger, walking out of the room, closed the door with a violence that shook the chair on which she was seated.

The senses of poor Florence were indeed stunned by the unexpected charges brought against her, and the uncharitable conclusions upon her conduct, drawn by the female vixen who had just left her; she could not conceal from herself the serious consequences which might arise from this unqualified attack upon her character; and despair urged, as the only step she could now take, the quitting instantly her present abode, and burying, in total seclusion, herself and attendant sorrows, where mention of her might never more be heard, and where she fervently hoped and believed she should find an early and unknown grave.

But soon did a proper sense of the irreligious tendency of such resolutions and hopes check the progress of reflection, pregnant with such dangerous result; it
taught

taught her to look to a higher source for comfort; and with a thorough repentance of former follies, former errors, to return grateful thanks to the Supreme Disposer of events, that amid all her sufferings, conscious rectitude was yet her bosom companion, her mind was unstained by guilt, her actions could yet bear the scrutiny of conscience. Consoled by these ruminations, and reassured by her fervent appeals to Heaven for continued support and protection, she once more packed up her clothes, and then began to direct her attention as to where she was that night to lay her head. Suddenly she recollected the good and charitable Mrs. Mills, and, wondering that she had not earlier remembered the benevolent friend of the deserted Agnes, she instantly prepared for a walk to Greenstreet; and, packing up a small bundle with her night-clothes, which she carried in her hand, she sought Mrs. Benson, to ask permission to leave the remainder until the following day; this was without hesitation granted,

granted, and Florence quitted that roof under which she had so lately entered.

Scarcely had she proceeded ten paces, when she was overtaken by Mr. Simpson ; with a simpering bow he offered to take the parcel from her, accompanied by the assurance that he should be very happy to be considered as her humble servant.

The beggared wanderer, annoyed by the interruption given to her sad reflections, briefly declined the civility ; and was proceeding, when, to her infinite astonishment, he attempted drawing her hand within his arm, and announced his intention, at all events, to be her companion : he then acknowledged his determination once to have married her ; but that as his friend, Mrs. Benson, had given him proof of her frailty but that very day, that she must no longer encourage a hope of that kind ; but that as he really admired her, and had no doubt the passion would become mutual, he would hire a snug cottage at Putney, or Islington, if she preferred that, where

where he could always visit her without scandal ; and as he would pass for brother, cousin, or even husband, if she pleased, he thought the offer very liberal, and much more to her advantage than her present vagrant life.

Florence, with her bonnet slouched over her face, had continued walking on, without once attempting the delivery of a reply during Mr. Simpson's speech ; but she now turned her eyes towards him, with that impressively repelling dignity she so eminently possessed, and with a look so full of meaning, so expressive of all she felt, that the poor little trembling vendor of butter and cheese shrank appalled from the survey. He stammered out a hope that she was not displeased, that if he had done wrong, he had been misled by his neighbour ; and progressively proceeded from apology to apology, until he at length arrived at his original intentions ; declared his belief that she had been wronged ; and assured her that if she could only

prove to his satisfaction that the lord had not accomplished his evil designs upon her; he was still ready to place her at the head of his house, and make her his lawful wife.

Amid all her causes for grief, for mortification, and anger, Florence could not resist a smile at the penitent countenance of her diminutive lover, or at its sudden transition to an expression of the certain effect of his generosity, in the proof he had evinced of his passion, and of the delight he anticipated from his declaration on her behalf. She, however, smothered the appearance of the stranger; and, smoothing her features into a resumption of that gravity they had now, alas! long worn, she put a speedy termination to the rising expectations of Willy Simpson, and sent him home to his shop, ashamed of his attempt to become a man of fashion, and most woefully disappointed in not calling so beautiful a creature his, either by the appellation of mistress or wife.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

I tremble at that in which I once triumph'd!

I blush at that of which I once was vain!

Ah! pleasure, pleasure, what art thou?

The death of reason.

YOUNG.

.....

That time is past;

And all its aching joys are now no more,

And all its dizzy raptures.

WORDSWORTH.

The Register-Office.

FLORENCE, in seeking Mrs. Mills, had the double intention of securing a respectable temporary asylum, and hereafter of obtaining, by her means, a more lasting one; but on knocking at the door, it was opened by a young lad, who civilly invited her in,

and told her he would immediately call the gentlewoman of the house; but that he himself was only waiting for an answer to a letter he had brought. In a few minutes he returned, and with him the gentlewoman of the house, who appeared to be rather too fine a lady, in her own estimation, for the sphere she filled. In reply to the inquiry of Florence for Mrs. Mills, she announced herself as her niece; at the same time exhibiting that hand in every direction which bore the newly-acquired testimony of a wife. Mrs. Mills had resigned her house and all its advantages to this her representative, while she herself had retired to Birmingham, where she resided with her son, who had a comfortable situation in one of the manufactories.

This was no inconsiderable disappointment to Florence; but an essential service could here be yet rendered her; and she immediately stated her wants to little Mrs. Fenner. With a lodging she unfortunately could not be accommodated; and she proceeded

ceeded to make inquiry for some situation which would afford her a maintenance, having declined to fill that of either governess or companion.

“ Oh yes, you do perfectly right, ma'am,” returned the bride, affectedly ; “ they are the hardest of all possible servitudes. Nothing suits half so well as a lady’s maid, if your clothes were but a little smarter ; but that plain bombazeen dress, and close bonnet, wont answer at all ; but if you have anything that is more stylish to set off your first appearance, you will, of course, have all your mistress’s cast gowns to help you on ; and, indeed, it is by far the most indolent and easy place on my list ; besides it is now the fashion to consider them as oracles ; it is no uncommon thing to hear a lady of rank say her maid thinks this dress becoming, or that hideous ; and she is, therefore, obliged to wear the one, or discard the other ; that her maid dislikes her to go to one place, or wishes her to accept an invitation to some other ; and the asser-

tion is not *quite* a fib neither ; for this is generally a personage of the first importance in a nobleman or gentleman's family ; for if she be dexterous in getting into the secrets of any little flirtation that may be going forward, she may then make her own terms, and do just as she pleases for the remainder of her life. I merely mention this for your information, ma'am, and by way of advice ; for I conclude you are but just from the country, by that modest-looking slouch, and that kind of embarrassed way with you."

" Such a situation would not do for me," said the downcast orphan, soliloquizing in a musing tone. " I cannot sink to servitude either."

" Servitude ! dear me, how you country folks mistake the matter ! why a lady's maid's principal service is only to serve herself ; and the very name of a servant is quite abolished ; my lady's woman is the phrase ; and she is generally far more mistress

dress in the house than she who bears the nominal rank."

"I doubt not it is such as you represent it," returned Florence; "but still it is a situation that would not do for me; I dislike being domesticated with a private family, and would prefer almost anything. I have some ingenuity in fancy articles, if I could secure employment of that description."

"Wait then a few minutes, and I will refer to my book of entry for names and particulars; but really I know but little about the matter, as you have called at an unlucky moment; for I seldom have plagued myself with business since I have been married, except when my husband is absent; for I now spend most of my time in the cultivation of my mind; and to own the truth, you have, by this interruption, obliged me to lay aside a most interesting new novel, just when all my sympathy had been awakened for the poor heroine, whom I have left chained to the earth in a damp

F 4

dungeon,

dungeon, where loathsome reptiles crawl, and the bird of night was screaming in her ears;" and the conceited little mental cultivator passed into an inner room.

Left alone, Florence began to consider of the means of payment for the service she had required; she knew not the usual demand; and if she had, she possessed not a shilling for its liquidation; her walk had exhausted her, the day was far advanced, and Nature required support. Driven to the most pitiable distress in which we have yet beheld her, the drooping Florence had risen from her seat, with the intention of quitting the house without further explanation, when the door opened, and a plain-dressed respectable-looking young man entered. He made a passing bow, and was proceeding to the room where Mrs. Fener was yet employed in the examination of her entry-book, when a deep sigh from the bosom of our heroine drew his attention: he started; looked again; then bowing profoundly, uttered his hope that no
misfortune

misfortune had befallen Miss Vincent. The astonished girl gazed for a moment in silence; the features of the inquirer were not unknown to her; but memory of the individual did not aid her recollection: yet the grateful Fenner left her not long in suspense; he recapitulated to her the many acts of kindness he had received at her hands, during the long and fatal illness of his poor old mother, the schoolmistress of her native village, of the hours she had so often devoted to her sickbed, when his attendance, as parish-clerk, called him from his dutiful attentions, or the gratification the pious and dying Christian had expressed at her readiness to acquiesce in those frequently-requested visits, in defiance of the imperious demands of pleasure and amusement, which in vain contested the point with her entreaties.

Florence blushed at the eulogium; but sincerely was her heart raised in grateful acknowledgments to Heaven, for the unlooked-for relief she had received, by the

truly unexpected appearance of a friend, in the moment when she had almost resigned herself a willing victim to despair.

Her looks betrayed her fatigue and exhaustion; the little wife was intreated to afford a welcome to the benefactress of her husband; and she forgot the ideal distresses of an imaginary being, to aid and relieve those of a real one; the adventure formed a sort of romantic incident in her drama; and she was on the alert in giving orders for her accommodation. The unexpected visitor thankfully partook of the refreshments placed before her, and readily accepted the offer of a bed, as Mrs. Fenner had refused her lodgings, she afterwards laughingly told her, from the fear that she was not sufficiently genteel to support them with *eclat*. But although the room had been taken possession of by Florence for that night, it was certainly not her intention to remain, as Mr. Fenner refused to receive remuneration, and had actually proposed that she should, for the present,

continue

continue their guest. She accepted the loan of three guineas; and the next day, taking a coach for that purpose, she once more, and for the last time, returned to Mrs. Benson's for the remainder of her clothes.

She did not alight, but simply requested her trunk might be brought down; but ere the wary Molly would comply, she appealed to the authority of Mrs. Benson herself, who instantly made her appearance at the door—"Well!" she exclaimed, "and so you really have the confidence to shew your face again here, notwithstanding I forbade you! and you expect to find your letter do you?"

"What letter?" eagerly inquired Florence; "from whom was it brought?"

"Why from whom should it be brought but your gallant, the lord, to be sure! he came galloping here after you, five minutes after I had turned you out; but Molly, who did not know you was gone for good and all, only said you was stept out for a

bit of a walk; and so he put his hand in his pocket and took out the letter——”

“Which you will be pleased instantly to give me,” interrupted our heroine.

“Give you!” screamed Mrs. Benson; “what do you take me for, hussey? do you think I look fit for a go-between, or that I keep a disorderly house for people to leave their assignations at? I tossed the letter into the fire the minute he was gone, and if you had gone there with it, it would be no matter;” and, kicking, with contempt, the little trunk Molly had brought down, this female champion for decorum retreated beneath the covert of her own roof, and, closing the door, left her late lodger at liberty to return from whence she came; and this she did without much delay, although not a little distressed at the fate of a letter whose contents most deeply interested her; for if lord Leslie had written to her at a moment when he doubtless imagined he could have commanded an inter-
5 view,

view, the letter assuredly must have contained some matter of moment.

Various were the conjectures to which the circumstance had given rise ; but truly mortifying was the most probable conclusion she could draw, that it was possibly a delicate mean of conveying pecuniary relief to her but too evident distress ; and this was more particularly embarrassing, as she neither knew the exact state of the case, nor, if so, the sum he might thus have sent her ; to which was added the bitter reflection that she had it not in her power to have returned it, if she could have ascertained what the officiousness of Mrs. Benson had placed beyond her reach.

A neat and comfortable dinner, at the early hour of two o'clock, waited her return ; and in compliance with the evident wishes of her little hostess, she had certainly endeavoured to render her dress somewhat more stylish than it had appeared the day before ; so that although the bombazeen retained its station, its sombre hue

hue had been relieved by some of those trifling additions which close mourning allows.

In compliance with her earnest solicitations that some employment might be procured for her, her kind and truly benevolent friend, Mr. Fenner, at length acquiesced in her wishes, by recommending her to his cousin, who was a fancy-dress maker of some celebrity in her line ; at her house it was necessary she should reside, in order to fill the situation required ; and, in consideration of her relative's interest in her behalf, she was allowed a chamber exclusively for her own use.

Here, in quietness, in domestic peace, amid civil and industrious inmates, our late wanderer enjoyed, if not content, at least exemption from actual misery. By a close application to her needle, she freed herself from debt ; nor had she even occasion to break in beyond a few shillings upon her little borrowed hoard of the three guineas, with which the kind-hearted parish-clerk had supplied her. In retirement, such as
her

her present situation afforded, the once volatile, inconsiderate, unreflecting votary of Folly had leisure for a full and painful survey of the past; she did not regret that she had omitted the frequent opportunities heretofore in her power of forming a matrimonial establishment, such as her heart had no interest in, or where she could only have been guided by mercenary motives; for, in justice to the erring fair one, we must assert that even at this painful moment of poverty, mortification, and humbled vanity, she would still, upon the same ground, have made the same rejection; but she did lament—yes, and with the bitter aggravation of self-reproach, that she had not permitted the influence of Reason its free operation, that caprice, whim, and that most fatal propensity, coquetry, had been suffered to supersede her influence. She was sensible that at one period of her life Bentinck could have commanded her best affections, but she felt *now* not quite sure that he would have retained them; that

volatility

volatility of character, that general but superficial knowledge which rendered him the pleasant, agreeable, and even entertaining character of the hour, were not, however, calculated to insure that deference to a husband's judgment and superior intellect, which she could have wished to have been possessed by the man with whom she should form so momentous an engagement, to his direction to have submitted her own hitherto-unlicensed follies, by his discretion to have been guided, by his affection to have been guarded and protected from the ills of life; or if he had unexpectedly been overwhelmed by misfortune, with him to have shared its pressure, and, by a cheerful unrepining acquiescence in the decrees of fate, have still further rivetted those bonds, which, in youth's more smiling dawn, had been linked.

Reason pointed the finger to Elliot, the deserving Elliot, who, for her sake, had become a self-banished man to a distant and unhealthy clime; she esteemed and respected,

spected, but she felt she had never loved him; her ideas were too refined to adopt the generally-received opinion that love would follow matrimony; she preferred that it should precede it. This chain of reflection, as if of course, presented the form of Leslie: she started in terror from the phantom, when she became sensible that in him appeared united all that magic fancy had sketched; she dared not indulge the dangerous delusions of imagination; her work was thrown aside, as if an auxiliary in the mischief, and she had recourse to a book; but the wanderings of the mind were not under the influence of reason's dictates, and Leslie certainly pursued her through each varied page.

CHAP. VII.

The phantoms of the troubled day
Fast crowding upon memory's breast,
Their sorrow-painted forms display,
Nor leave one little pause of rest.

POLWHELE.

.....

Aghast the heart-struck mourner stands,
Glaz'd are her eyes, convuls'd her hands,
O'erwhelming anguish checks her labouring breath,
Crush'd by despair's intolerable weight.

CHARLOTTE SMITH.

The scene changes to Ireland.

AGNES had now passed nearly three months with Mrs. Maitland, in a situation most respectable and soothing to her feelings, being

ing every where introduced and supported as the friend of her new patroness; but with her own good fortune, gratitude heightened in her bosom to Florence, by whose liberality she had been enabled to seek it: the account of the death of Mr. Vincent had only reached her through the medium of a magazine, in which it had been inserted under the head of domestic occurrences, and she had immediately on this event written to Florence; but her removal so abruptly from Sackville-street had prevented its reaching those hands for whom it was intended; and vain had been the result of every other inquiry to learn the destination of Miss Vincent.

Agnes was, however, far from conceiving that poverty had become her lot in the death of Mr. Vincent; general report, indeed, had announced the embarrassment of his affairs; but the extent of the misfortunes of his daughter she was yet wholly ignorant of.

Mrs. Maitland conversed but little in a domestic

domestic *tête-à-tête*; she appeared to have become habitually silent, and to have conceived an aversion to the fatigue of conversation; yet her mind never seemed vacant; it was busied, as if deep reflection absorbed the whole powers of thought. Mr. Maitland had not been visible since her arrival, but of him Henrietta never spoke; yet although interest and curiosity were both alive, delicacy repressed the inquiries of Agnes.

They mixed less each day in the dissipated little world of Dublin; and Henrietta seemed suddenly rather more desirous of privacy and meditation, than she had heretofore been of public splendour and *eclat*.

Having declined joining a party at Mrs. Beresford's in Merrion-square, she placed her young *protégée* beneath the care of a friend, and requested that she would accompany her. This friend soon became engaged at cards; and Agnes amused herself with the succession of company which
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had assembled in immense crowds, and conversing alternately with each passing acquaintance, when lord Creswell was announced.

The name struck on the ear of Agnes as she stood near the door of entrance. He paid his compliments to the lady of the house, with all his accustomed ease and elegance, and then looked around the room, to discover to whom he was known of the present party. Amid the group, Miss Dursley met his survey ; but she studiously avoided giving him the opportunity of a bow, should his usual effrontery induce the offer of one, and immediately moved her station to a more distant part of the room. He, however, still pursued her, placing himself near where she stood, without being exactly at her side, but in an opposite direction, which gave him the opportunity of at once annoying and distressing her, by a stare compounded of insolence and admiration. Her naturally timid and gentle nature was oppressed and overcome by
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the cruel perseverance of this nobleman, mingled with the trembling dread that he might mar her present flattering prospects, in prejudicing the mind of Mrs. Maitland against her, by breathing a tale as infamous as that which he had communicated or insinuated to the earl and countess of Somerton.

A slight faintness oppressed her, and, alarmed by a dread of attracting attention, from an indisposition which might corroborate his unjust assertions, she stretched out her hand to take a glass of ice from a tray of refreshments which a servant held near her, in the hope it would recruit her; but her intent was prevented by Creswell, who, hastily stepping forward, seized her gloveless hand, and addressed her by name, begging she would say what he should have the honour to present her with?

The colour of Agnes rose as she made an attempt to repulse the presuming viscount, by a cold negative to his offered service; but to withdraw her hand she found impossible;

impossible; he yet forcibly retained it, and, placing it within his arm, proposed, with perfect *sang froid*, that she would promenade the room. Suddenly, however, as she again attempted to extricate it, the pressure was converted into a grasp; and his eyes no longer fixed on her countenance, but on the arm of that hand he retained; his complexion faded to a ghastly hue, his lips trembled, as in hurried accents he exclaimed—"The armlet! that armlet! where did you obtain it? how came it in your possession? do not prevaricate, for I must—I will know!"

"She who bequeathed it to me," replied the terrified Agnes, whom surprise hurried into an involuntary answer, "was a near relative—her name, Dursley——"

"Dursley!" interrupted Creswell; "how could she obtain it? the name is wholly unknown to me; and yet this armlet bears connexion with one whose destiny has ever most deeply interested me! This Mrs. Dursley was, of course, your mother? tell me

me—is she in existence? do not trifle with me! can I see her? it is of moment that I do so! I implore, I conjure you! grant me every particular! be but my friend in this instance, and you rob me of the power of being longer your enemy; nay, my gratitude shall be as ceaseless as active!”

“My enemy, in justice, your lordship never had a right to be; but your gratitude, my lord, could never interest me. Still, as I have no cause for secrecy, and you seem, from this evidently painful emotion, to be strangely anxious for a solution of the queries proposed, I am ready to inform you that Mrs. Dursley was only my aunt, and not my mother; and that her death had taken place many months before I became an inmate in that house from which base aspersion and unmerited obloquy expelled me!”

The observation of Agnes was now attracted by several audible whispers near her; she saw the extraordinary *tête-à-tête*, although only partially heard, had drawn the

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the whole attention of those around ; and, extremely distressed at becoming, by her own inadvertence, an object of such general notice, she linked her arm within that of a passing acquaintance, and quitted the spot where lord Creswell yet remained as if spell-bound, and wrapt in profound reflection, apparently unconscious of the gaze of astonishment he had arrested ; nor did she again afford him the opportunity of addressing her, although he evidently followed her for that purpose ; yet had his manner, as well as looks, undergone a complete revolution ; the colour no more returned with its natural florid tint to his cheeks, his eyes no longer roved with that expression of libertinism which was their general habit, nor did his air wear that character of self-approbation which had hitherto always distinguished him.

Our Portuguese beheld with astonishment an effect she could not trace ; and nothing but a sense of her own dignity, and the strong resentment she yet retained of the

nature of the injury he had so wantonly inflicted, could have deterred her from seeking its source even from himself. Busy reflection upon the inexplicable incident which had happened, rendered the remainder of the evening even irksomely tiresome; and she was greatly relieved when the carriage was announced. Lord Creswell caught at the opportunity, which he had apparently waited for, and pressed forward in order to lead her to it; but the friend with whom she had come not observing his lordship's intention, placed her under the care of one of the party of the table she had just quitted, to conduct her to the carriage, and thus inadvertently defeated the design of the viscount.

On her return home, Agnes found Mrs. Maitland had not yet retired to bed; but, on the contrary, sent an invitation to her young friend to come to her dressing-room, where, for the last two hours, she had sat reading. Agnes readily obeyed the summons; and, to her no small satisfaction,

found

found Henrietta more than usually inclined to enter into conversation; with avidity she therefore embraced the unlooked-for opportunity, and ventured the mention of lord Creswell's strange conduct and minute inquiry with respect to the armlet she wore: as she advanced in her account, she hesitated, from the dread of awaking some unpleasant remembrance in the mind of her friend, as she had always remarked an anxiety on her part to avoid a recurrence to any thing connected with the life of Mrs. Dursley, or any past events attached to it.

Henrietta unclasped the trinket from the arm of Agnes in silence; she examined it attentively, but without surprise, and then said—"I never before observed you wear this ornament."

"I never did; my mourning has, until the change of this evening, been too deep to allow of it; but it was the particular desire of my aunt that I should always preserve it with care; she herself had con-

stantly worn it, even within the last few hours of her life, when it was consigned to me ; yet as she delivered this trinket, some little time before the ring intended for yourself, I could not but observe a striking difference in her manner attached to each ; I thought she averted her eyes even with terror from the latter, while the former was bedewed with her tears."

Henrietta started ; her colour changed, and, fixing her eyes on Agnes, she returned — " You were a young but a scrutinizing observer, to be so minute in your delineation of the scene."

" Her manner must have been most peculiarly marked to have been noticed by me, at a moment when my feelings were overcome with anguish and affliction for a loss I could not but dread, although of its so near approach I was not at that time sensible."

" Her manner, no doubt, was marked," repeated Henrietta, with a shuddering movement of her frame ; " it had cause to be

be so. Recurrence to former days, to those more immediately spent with Theresa, agitates and distresses me too deeply to be volunteered; yet I will now venture a little further on the theme, since you have broached it; and know, my young friend, that this Creswell, whose libertinism of habits, and depravity of principles, have nearly been fatal to your reputation, though they were foiled in the extent of the meditated injury, is no other than the husband of your aunt——”

“And was he then so base as to desert her?” interrupted Agnes.

“Not so,” returned Mrs. Maitland; “it was she who eloped from him; but her flight was not then the flight of guilt; it was the penitent sacrifice of one who had perjured her vows to God, in offering them to man! She became a wife, after having for some months taken the veil in the convent of St. Jago, in your native Portugal: but the fatal delusion of love triumphed not long over the voice of con-

science ; her outraged faith, her violation of the sacred tenets of her religion, marred even the early days of connubial bliss. A severe and dangerous illness completed the horrors of the Catholic ; and, during that sad period, she registered a mental oath, if life was spared to grant time for all the expiation in her power, to offer up a sacrifice more painful far than abridged existence, to quit for ever the arms of the heretic, whose love and devotion had been the seducers which had overthrown the piety of her soul, and consigned her to destruction. Health returned to Theresa ; but with it no forgetfulness of that resolution which had been, by oath, confirmed in the hour of menaced danger. She secretly quitted the still-enamoured Creswell, leaving for him a letter, in a style of anguish, and written under such dreadful conflicts of mind, as almost to defeat the purpose for which she had suffered, by attempting it at all ; and nearly left him as ignorant of her motives for the desertion,

from

from its incoherence, as if no such explanation had been given, being wholly silent as to her future plans or destination. With strictest caution she concealed from his researches the place of her seclusion, convinced she had every thing to dread from the weakness of her own heart, if she afforded him the opportunity of effecting a reunion. Her eldest sister, who was her senior by many years, was your mother; and she alone knew of the spot of her retreat; herself and husband, as you have before heard, fell victims to party suspicion, and political intrigue; and you were then conveyed by a faithful servant to the protection of your aunt, the affectionate but voluntarily widowed wife! Even I never knew the fate of Theresa after her marriage, until that letter—that soul-harrowing letter reached my hands, dispatched by yourself!”

A pause ensued. Henrietta sat as if the recollection of the contents of that letter had drawn all her faculties to that point of

contemplation ; she gazed on her companion, but not with the vision of observation ; while poor Agnes breathed the sigh of melancholy for the fate of her unfortunate relative.

“ But the ring—to whom did that attach ? ”

The colour faded from the cheeks of Henrietta ; there was a livid hue on her complexion, a ghastly expression of countenance, as she rejoined—“ To one who was deceived, injured, and betrayed ; the victim of a deep successful plot ! ”

“ Gracious Heaven ! surely my aunt could never have entered into a conspiracy so black as those words indicate ? it is impossible ! yet,” she added, with a painful doubt, “ in the delirium of a dreadful fever, when memory seemed to hang over the past, she breathed forth some unconnected sentences, that spoke corroboration to the surmise, appalling as it is ! ”

“ Beware, young woman, how you allude, in such harsh language, to this deed !

If

If it be black, treacherous, and infamous, it was your now only friend who was its instigator—your dearest relative, and protecting mother, who was its perpetrator! Philip!" added Henrietta, in a hollow voice, "Philip! that unfortunate misguided youth, perished in its accomplishment! yet no murderous hand was raised to strike the untimely blow; he died, but from the effect of circumstances, whose direful issue was not hoped, though it might indeed have been feared!"

The feelings of the Portuguese became unnerved as she spoke; tears of anguish streamed down her pale and ashy cheeks, while horror of the past gave an awful expression to her features.

"Alas!" faltered Agnes, as she gazed on the convulsed, agitated Henrietta, "what motive could have instigated actions, whose bare remembrance has now the power thus to overwhelm your mind and frame?"

"Its instigator!" returned the hitherto

mysterious wife, as arrogant contempt, and wildest anger, alternately flashed from her eyes; “its instigator! Scorn, derision, and neglect! say, were not these enough to steel a woman’s soul to all that revenge could point, till hate fulfilled what baffled love began?”

The heart of the Portuguese again beat high; that spirit of defiance, which from its earliest years had marked her character, gave an animating glow to her eloquent countenance, while from the glossy brilliance of her “deep dark eyes” there flashed a volume of passion; then bursting forth into one of those invectives, which at times appeared to afford the only relief to her swelling bosom, she continued—“Maitland! false, perfidious, ungenerous Maitland! at once the dearest object of my first and sanguine love, the victim of my direst, fellest hate! the power has been mine to torture and overwhelm thee! Philip, thou didst innocently perish by the means of Henrietta; yet will she

she glory in the prosecution of her revenge!"

At this moment when the word "revenge" sounded on the beauteous lips of the Portuguese, a loud ringing at the bell was succeeded by sounds of tumultuous confusion, and a strange discordant noise struck on the affrighted ears of the timid Agnes, which momentarily increased as footsteps approached; the clamour drew yet nearer; for the national wailings of an Hibernian assembly of the lower order preceded the body of a man, which, borne in the arms of three others, was now lain at the feet of Henrietta.

The heart-rending shriek which seemed to issue from the very soul of the tortured wife, recognized the breathless remains of him she had so recently avowed her ability and inclination to pursue with direst proofs of hate. She threw herself beside him in agonies, such as the strongest mental suffering could alone have inflicted; she called
G 6 upon

upon him by the tenderest names of lover and of friend!

“And was he not also your husband?” inquired one of the foremost of the three.

The exclamations of Henrietta ceased. Extended upon the yet bleeding corpse, she raised herself on her knees beside it, and threw back the luxuriant hair, which the attitude she had at first assumed had disordered over her beautiful face, as with inexplicable expression of countenance she repeated—“Yes, he was also my husband; be that remembered, poor suffering wife! lost, undone Henrietta!” Then, relapsing into agonies as of some harrowing reflection, she sunk in convulsions on the floor.

The horror which had seized the faculties of Agnes had hitherto superseded recollection; she had been stunned by the awful scene before her; but exertion was now necessary, and she assisted in conveying to her own chamber the mysterious invalid;

invalid ; and then returned to see that restoratives were immediately administered, and medical aid summoned for the unhappy Maitland ; but all was vain ; life had fled its habitation, and the mangled form of the hapless sufferer was conveyed into another apartment.

In answer to her eager inquiries, she learnt that a stranger, who appeared ill and miserable, had taken lodgings in a small cottage, inhabited by an Englishwoman, the widow of a native of that spot, and that he had been much in the habit of wandering among the rocks with which the hamlet was surrounded ; that on the present occasion he had taken the only child of the widow, a boy of seven years old, as he had frequently done before, to be the companion of his rambles ; but having detained him out later than usual, and fearing the consequent alarm of his mother, had endeavoured to discover a nearer road home, and, in so doing, had proceeded first to ascertain the safety of the path ; but unfortunately

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fortunately his foot slipped, he had lost his hold, and was instantly precipitated into the tremendous cavity beneath: the child, not aware of the dangerous extent of the injury, had carefully gained the ground in safety; but at length alarmed at not being joined by his conductor, had ran home with the intelligence.

The body was soon discovered; and they hastened for assistance to some of the nearest houses; at one of these they accidentally met with a servant of Mr. Maitland's establishment, who, in the mangled stranger, with infinite astonishment, recognized his own master; and by him they had been directed where to convey the body.

CHAP. VIII.

Let the torrent roar!

It can but overwhelm me in its fall;

And life and death are now alike to me. SOUTHERN.

.....

I thought his pride, and the disdainful manner,

In which he treated all my constant sufferings,

Had broke my fetters, and assur'd my freedom:

Alas! I did not see

That all the malice of my heart was love,

Triumphing thus, and yet a captive still!

PHILIPS.

The Brothers.

THE wretched victim of high unbending passions, the widowed Henrietta, was now lain on the bed of illness, an object calculated to inspire those blended sensations of horror

horror and compassion, that must ever meet in the breast of the truly humane, even though they behold the perhaps-merited sufferings of a sinner.

A fever of considerable violence wrapt her senses for a time in a delirium, that did not, however, counteract the anguish of mental retrospection ; for thought, even in its present incoherent and distracted state, yet rested on the past, to which temporary insanity gave the wildest imagery of even aggravated horror.

The day after the melancholy catastrophe of the unhappy Maitland, Agnes received a letter from Lord Creswell ; it was couched in terms of respect, far different from his former manner ; while he implored, with expressions of the strongest interest, for an interview ; adding, that when he acknowledged the being whose fate she appeared to possess the clue to elucidate had been the object of his first and most honourable connubial love, he trusted it would efface from her mind every
idea

idea of impropriety in granting his urgent intreaties; concluding with the offer of every apology language could devise for his past ungenerous conduct towards herself, which had been grounded, though it could not be defended thereby, on erroneous appearances, connected with his having been originally made known to her under the roof and protection of Mrs. Bagley.

Those palliatives, which appeared to have rested sufficiently upon the mind of lord Creswell, as with him to amount nearly to sufficient apologies for his past conduct towards her, weighed not with equal force upon the recollection of Agnes; all intercourse with him would, therefore, have been rejected, if he had not possessed a claim upon her attention, as the husband of her late respected protectress; she consequently did not delay a reply; but as she was yet but partially informed of those events connected with Henrietta, she knew not how far she might venture a communication

nication of those already confided to her, lest she should supply him with materials to do still further mischief; she therefore only briefly informed him, that the Theresa of whose fate he appeared ignorant had long since been numbered with the dead; and this intelligence she conveyed in such gentle and cautious terms, as her own sensibility dictated; but at the same time made no mention of her own relative connexion, lest it should have proved an ostensible means of his intrusion upon her hereafter; and, at the present moment, she offered, as an ample excuse for brevity, and as a barrier to a renewal of correspondence, the dangerous state of health of Mrs. Maitland, and the impossibility of quitting her for ever so short a period.

With indefatigable care, and zealous gratitude, the amiable Agnes watched over her invalid benefactress, being her most active and attentive nurse, and tender supporter, for many weeks of dreadful and alarming illness, during which time the re-
mains

mains of the unfortunate Maitland had, according to the expressed desire of the afflicted lord Shirley, been conveyed to England, to be there deposited in the family vault. As the fever gradually abated, the delirium vanished; and Henrietta became sensible of the kind and affectionate cares of her young companion.

With the extreme debility of corporeal strength, from the effects of fever, that mental violence of disposition which had characterized the Portuguese, became, in a great degree, allayed.

The sudden appalling sight of the mangled corpse of him who had so long been the object of her vindictive vengeance, had arrested, with force of maddening influence, the current of rageful fury; and as her victim lay before her, cloathed in the most heart-rending horrid livery of death, she experienced that dread transition of feeling, which appertains to the direful extremes of love and hatred, which we may pronounce to be among the unnatural emotions

emotions of the female breast, although real life has presented the existence of women capable of acknowledging their influence; and had Henrietta even carried her revenge to the length of an Hermione, she would, like her, have mourned and bewailed the hero, whose misery, death, and destruction, she had planned and assisted to execute.

Such are the strange contradictions of human nature, which, at times has caused the historic page to rival the marvellous of romance, and given to reality those improbabilities, that a novel-writer attempting to imitate in their full extent, would, in his narrative, be, perhaps, pronounced impossibilities.

The delicate attentions, and amiable solicitude of Miss Dursley, won the confidence of the wretched widow, who at times unburthened her tortured bosom of its long pent-up woes, by relating some of those past events which had finally linked the destinies of Maitland and herself. From these

these detached confessions, wrung by contrition from the lacerated heart of the so late vindictive Henrietta, the whole narrative of connecting circumstances became eventually elucidated, and were such as are now offered to the reader.

Stephen viscount Shirley had two sons, by a marriage with his cousin, the portionless but amiable Margaret, who died not very long after the birth of her last child.

Parental partiality, that fatal source of domestic feuds, and which dates its origin so often from unaccountable caprice, severed the fraternal affection of the brothers; and the junior, from earliest youth, became the little tyrant of the family. Nature had bestowed upon him personal attractions far beyond those of his brother; but his heart was no similarly fair gift from this common mother; or if it were, habits of pernicious indulgence had perverted it into all that was reprehensible and unworthy.

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proved him amply deserving the care and interest of the excellent MannoX.

Years passed on, still no change occurred in the sentiments of lord Shirley; and, as if he wished to distinguish, in the most public manner possible, between his offspring, and to proclaim to the world at large his intention of wholly alienating the favourite son from the hated heir, he sent the youths to different seminaries, and finally to separate universities.

With the increasing age of Clement, the friendship of Mr. MannoX strengthened; and to him he looked for that counsel, advice, and affection, which was refused him from that being to whom he was bound by the strongest ties of nature.

He had now become still more than ever the object of unjust aversion, and even of a father's parsimony, who, aware that when death closed the scene over himself, he could not withhold from the first born the entailed estates of his ancestors, resolved, while

while living, to reserve that income which was justly due to his elder son, to add to a private provision for his junior idol.

Little intercourse subsisted between the brothers; and cold civility was all that passed when, by accident, they met. Through the medium of the friendly interest of Mr. Manno, he procured a company for Clement in a militia regiment, commanded by his brother-in-law; and on this slender pay, with the scanty pittance allowed him by the viscount, the heir of those wealthy domains attached to the House of Shirley was compelled to subsist, in temporary obscurity.

It was during this period that the heart of our unfortunate became captive to the daughter of colonel Hammond, whose beauty and accomplishments were the theme of the garrison, of which her father's regiment formed a part. The attentions of another gentleman, of very considerable fortune and other recommendations, who at this time began to distinguish the

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blooming Harriet by much marked attention, hastened the addresses of captain Maitland, whose warm and sanguine affection overleaping the bounds of prudence and rationality, made a precipitate offer of his hand to her whom appearance led him to conclude was amply deserving of all his love.

The blushing Harriet referred him to her father, with that soft and timid hesitation which, giving to suspense all the delusive charms of hope, heightens the passion of love. Colonel Hammond greeted the communication of Clement with that undisguised satisfaction which proved he had no enemy in him to apprehend; yet the prudent father premised his own consent, by captain Maitland obtaining that of the viscount, adding, that under such circumstances alone he would sanction their union.

To lord Shirley then our sanguine lover repaired; but cold and unfeeling was the negative which chilled his suit. With stern
and

and relentless frown, his lordship avowed his disapprobation of any matrimonial engagements being formed by either of his sons, until a later period of life, alledging they were both of them, as yet, too young and inexperienced to decide so important an election. The refusal of his lordship did not, in fact, arise from the interest he felt in either the happiness or misery of a child he had always undeservedly abhorred, but upon a reliance on the doctrine of chance, which might possibly, by removing the immediate heir, open the succession to his less fortunate brother, if no descendants of his own intervened to bar the fond hope, which, so long nurtured, now almost amounted to expectation. Every expostulation became consequently unavailing; and sent Clement from the presence of his obdurate parent, decided upon an appeal to his early and never-failing friend, Mr. Mannox, before he again ventured an interview with his beloved Harriet; he therefore ordered his horse to be immediately

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ately

ately made ready, before the night should be too far advanced, to admit the visit he meditated to his faithful counsellor; and, in order to avoid the probability of encountering any of the family in the interim, who should read in his countenance the distraction of his mind, he retreated to a retired and not often frequented room on the ground floor, where he had scarcely thrown himself into a chair, when the door unclosed, and he beheld his brother advance towards him. Clement rose, with that sort of general politeness he would have observed to a stranger, and such, indeed, Francis might have been truly styled to him; but, contrary to his usual custom, the latter extended his hand, and greeted him with more of cordiality than he had at any time before evinced; while, with apparent interest and regard, he expressed his fears that something of an unpleasant nature had recently passed between him and his father, since he had just met the latter, whose looks indicated the state of his

his mind to be that of extreme irritability; and the depressed, gloomy, meditative mood in which he had just surprised Clement, had fully confirmed his fears of the result of that private interview he had heard him solicit.

Something like contempt hung on the lip of the ill-treated Clement, as his breast swelled with indignation at the remembered wrongs he had from childhood sustained, from the unjust partiality which had been invariably evinced to this younger brother, who, from infancy, had been encouraged and protected in tyrannizing over him, with all the insolent barbarism of that juvenile despotism which uncurbed indulgence so rapidly matures, and which the growth of reason had not corrected in the instance before us.

The silence of Clement was expressive of what he felt, for his countenance knew not disguise; it was the mirror of an ingenuous feeling heart; and the colour
H 3 heightened

heightened on the fine attractive features of Francis, as he marked the scale of estimation in which he was yet regarded by his brother, who had met his offered hand with the most frigid ceremony.

Francis appeared agitated; he turned away, and then again, as if irresolute, half advanced towards Clement, who had approached a window, impatiently looking for the arrival of his servant and horses—"Am I then to conclude," said Francis, in a firm and serious tone, "that you mean to repel me at once, both as a friend and a brother?"

"To regard you as the former, you have never yet put in my power; when you do the one, I may recollect the claims you have upon me for the other: from infancy, I have been unconscious of any cause why I have been held an alien to the ties of blood."

"And," returned Francis, "are the errors of the child to be held in remembrance,

brance, when he not only passes into manhood, but renounces the continuance of them?"

"We are told that to know ourselves is the most difficult lesson to be acquired; yet I think misfortune has therein been my tutor; and surely, if I am right, malice attaches not to my nature, nor does a vindictive spirit influence me; but memory refuses to aid your appeal by inference; in no one instance of advanced life, have you, by a single act of kindness, swept from its tablet the records of the past."

"Your reproaches doubly wound me, from a consciousness of their justice," replied Francis; "but do not impute the origin to unworthy motives, but rather from what I now feel to have been a reprehensible thoughtlessness, and a want of consideration, natural attendants upon a gay and dissipated career of pleasure, into which perhaps I have too freely plunged, connected also with accidental occurrences, which have never placed it in my power

to evince my altered character: I have disclaimed professions, while my actions have not been allowed to confirm their sincerity: while angered, perhaps unjustly, by the continued estrangement of your manner, I have rather avoided than sought you, until I found myself enabled to give proof of my inclination to unite the precious name of friend with that of brother."

Clement, entirely conquered by the issue of this unexpected and unlooked-for interview, for the first time in his life threw himself upon the breast of Francis: subdued by recent affliction and present kindness, he blushed at the injustice of the sentiments he had entertained on his brother's character, and at his own treasured dislike of so near a connexion, to whom his heart had been closed from the earliest era of remembrance. He candidly confessed all he felt; and mutual exchange of forgiveness was the groundwork of a bond of future good fellowship between them.

Clement no longer guarded his secret
from

from participation, and was inexpressibly relieved by the interest he had excited in the bosom of Francis; he accepted, with gratitude, his generous offer of service, and readily assented to the means pointed out to effect it: he agreed with Francis, on his statement of reasons for the measure, that some little delay was necessary to permit the anger of lord Shirley to subside, as they both felt assured that colonel Hammond would turn with strong resentment from the least demur in any family, allied as she was, to receive his daughter, and that at the present moment, such was very likely to arise from the recent displeasure of their father. Their plans thus adjusted, the brothers separated; and Clement, in pursuance of their scheme, immediately obtained leave of absence from colonel Hammond, whose daughter and Francis were alone in possession of the real motives which influenced him; while the viscount received it as a proof of an acquiescence in his decision.

CHAP. IX.

Yet tell me then, the maid who knows,

Why deepened on her cheek the rose?

SCOTT.

.....

“The work of fate

Is bearing on; its issue wait.”

The Cousins.

THERE was in the character of Clement an almost credulous confidence, that arose from the ingenuous candour of his own disposition, wholly free from that worldly policy and circumspect caution, which partakes but too largely of suspicion, and sometimes cunning. He had soon cause to lament this trait of disposition, if the loss of a woman, fickle and inconstant as

Harriet

Harriet Hammond, could be deemed a misfortune. Yes, Francis Maitland had, in maturer years, added to the depraved propensities of his earlier life, the dangerous talent of dissimulation; the beauty of Miss Hammond had enslaved his senses, before she had become the avowed object of his brother's addresses; and to supplant him, he formed the plot, which had been but too successfully practised; thus the affected friend had become the treacherous rival; while the absence of Clement, so artfully advised, allowed the desirable opportunities for the further prosecution of his plan.

Harriet, whose ambition, perhaps, had principally stimulated to encourage the pretensions of the heir of Shirley, soon resigned her heart to the assiduity of the attractively handsome, and insidiously-professing Francis; she became his wife, at that very period when the wary deceiver had been fostering the most sanguine hope in the breast of the candid and unsuspecting Clement, by his pretended confidence

dence in the secret preference of Harriet, which the disapprobation of colonel Hammond alone prevented from being avowed.

With any other man thus circumstanced, the naturally strong indignation and vivid resentment of captain Maitland would have induced an immediate appeal to that most destructive and erroneous of tribunals, the sword; but as it was, the ties of blood were remembered; and the ill-starred, unfortunate victim of parental aversion, fraternal duplicity, and the treacherous uncertainty of love, was left to mourn and lament his fate with his early friend, the sympathizing Mannox.

Death shortly after terminated the career of lord Shirley; and Clement became a more deserving representative of the honours of this noble house; while to Francis was willed all that fortune his partial father had accumulated to enrich his worthless favourite.

But it was not the acquisition of wealth and rank, those baubles only enviable to
the

the little mind, that was calculated to sooth the sorrows which had been inflicted on the heart of poor Clement ! friendship was the more successful anodyne ; and, linked with friendship, we may add a softer sentiment of interest, from the youngest daughter of Mr. Mannox, who had, in childhood, learned to pity the sufferings of her neglected, heart-broken playfellow, till pity had ripened into love, and love had eventually taught her to hold almost in veneration the virtues of her amiable companion. when maturer years gave larger field for their display, until, in her eyes, he realized perfection. But love, in the heart of the timid, gentle, unassuming Phœbe, was a sentiment of so tender and endearing a nature, that reason, while it checked its growth as a passion, did not repel its milder influence.

The disposition of the young lord Shirley naturally turned to the enjoyments of domestic life : wholly destitute of ambition, and without inclination for dissipation,

tion, his character was peculiarly formed to shine distinguished, as the affectionate husband, and the tender father. While thus Reflection busied herself with conjugal scenery, his lordship could not but mark the rising blush, and half-averted eyes of the unaffected Phœbe, whenever he approached her; nor was vanity required to construe the source of this embarrassment: from having been deceived in the professions of a woman, the viscount turned the more naturally to her, whose disposition had been known to him from her earliest years, and whose education he had seen completed and perfected, beneath the sedulous and judicious care of excellent exemplary parents. Love had fatally precipitated his first election; and Reason he now resolved should be the instigator of his present; while, as he dwelt on the feminine virtues, and the winning tenderness of Phœbe's character, his pensive mind again became illumined by the radiance of hope, whose effulgence can only be lasting
and

and sincere, when its light is struck from the flint of rationality.

The breast of Mr. Mannox glowed with the most gratifying feelings, as he eventually resigned his daughter to the arms of this favourite young friend, and hailed him as a son, to whom he had long supplied the place of a father ! his family and consideration in society sanctioned the election of lord Shirley with the world in general ; and this worthy man now reaped the reward of that disinterested benevolence, which had guided his conduct towards the amiable, neglected, and suffering Clement Maitland.

Three years of connubial life rolled over the heads of the young couple, and each still blessed the tie that had linked their fate in one. Either a latent apprehension that his wife might be rendered uneasy by a dread of his yet lingering attachment to the faithless Harriet, or the strong effects of indignant anger at the dupe he had been rendered, by the combined treachery
of

of herself and his brother, made lord Shirley averse to tendering inquiries as to the present pursuits of this undeserving pair; and as his lordship resided wholly in the North of England, while his brother was wedded to the metropolis, no communication of any kind occurred during these three years of domestic happiness.

It was about the termination of this period of time, that lord Shirley learned from casual intelligence, his misguided brother had become entirely devoted to the destructive vice of gaming; while the light conduct of his young and beautiful wife had already been severely commented upon, as, at best, teeming with imprudence and impropriety.

This account did not long precede the event of a dangerous illness, occasioned to Mr. Maitland by the bursting of a blood-vessel in a paroxysm of rage; produced by jealousy of his wife, in having unexpectedly broken in upon a very interesting and suspicious *tête-à-tête* with a young man of
notorious.

notorious gallantry, to whom many of the *haut ton* had already awarded the plume of conquest over the conjugal fidelity of the frail Mrs. Maitland.

This accident, although it did not produce immediate dissolution, yet its effects a few months afterwards terminated the existence of Francis. The conduct of his wife, however, had, in the interim, become so unlicensed, as to have obliged a separation, had life been prolonged to the husband ; and under the conviction that Harriet was no proper protectress of his child, the unhappy father, whom a long, painful, and tedious illness had brought to a sense of past misconduct and unworthiness, now wrote a letter of contrite supplication to his injured brother, in which he implored of him forgiveness, in language the most penitent and distressing ; while he strenuously recommended to his care his orphan boy, for whom a dying father pled.

Lord Shirley, on the receipt of this letter, hastened to town, in person to reply ; but Francis was no longer in existence
when

when he reached it; and the poor child, while his father yet lay unburied, was deserted by his other parent, who, securing to herself all the remaining valuables of the house, had followed the fortunes of her seducer to a distant land.

The soul of lord Shirley knew not revenge; and hard indeed must be that heart which infant innocence cannot reach. The little orphan received his caresses with apparent gratitude, at least, thus it appeared to his benevolent uncle, who felt that so helpless a creature, thrown on his mercy, claimed a father's care. Humanity never made a vain appeal to the heart of Clement; and he was upon the eve of writing to his Phœbe for her counsel as to his disposal, when his wishes were anticipated by a letter from lady Shirley, the contents of which endeared her still more than ever to her fond husband.

Informed of the death and insolvent circumstances of Francis, she was aware of what had actually happened, that the
wishes

wishes of the viscount, with regard to the little Maitland, would receive a check, from a delicate fear of placing beneath the same roof with herself the offspring of the unworthy woman to whom he had once been so passionately devoted ; and therefore instantly wrote, to state her own hopes that he would suffer his young companion to return with him, and supply the place of that son and heir which they had been so desirous should bless their union ; but as they had no children of their own, the little Sidney would, doubtless, soon become an object of peculiar interest and value to them.

Lord Shirley marked, and estimated the delicate conduct of his amiable wife ; and her latter prognostic did indeed seem likely to prove prophetic, since six years succeeded to the adoption of his nephew, and the young Sidney still remained the presumptive heir of Shirley ; for no offspring had yet risen to smile propitious on the sanguine wishes of the noble pair.

In

In the meanwhile, the juvenile Maitland, beneath the fostering care of his amiable and generous relatives, became an object deserving their warmest affection; for in his disposition there existed no vestige of parental character; he rather appeared to have inherited the exemplary virtues of his uncle, with an understanding that promised to mature into superior excellence, and a person that, without the pretensions of being critically handsome, was yet formed to please and interest, in no common degree.

He had already gained his ninth year, when lady Shirley at length gave, to her husband's long-resigned hopes, the expectation of a filial claimant on his affections: the idea was joyfully welcomed; yet, although the fruition of this event would deprive their loved *protégée* of brilliant prospects, still they mutually congratulated each other, that at his tender age he was not sensible of those privations it would be productive of to him; and that, at all events,

events, it could not deprive him of that affection they both cherished for him, as he would ever be considered as possessing the claims of a son. But fragile was the plant, and delicate the health of the infant hope of Shirley; while nothing, save a mother's assiduous and tender care, could have reared the drooping babe through the first stages of life.

Mr. MannoX, who apprehended the effects of that jealousy, arising from sudden disappointment of high-raised expectation, which might become infused into the mind of the superceded heir, deemed it most advisable to communicate to Sidney the extent of that gratitude he owed to his exemplary uncle, for that generosity of conduct, which he of all creation had least a right to have expected.

Although only eleven years of age when the little narrative of the past became known to him, the early matured understanding and susceptible mind of this amiable youth rendered the communication impressively

impressively rooted in his memory, engraven on his heart, and productive of every good effect Mr. Mannox had so anxiously hoped.

The narrow passion of envy sullied not the fine expansive soul of Sidney ; he beheld in the infantine Philip only the child of his benefactors, of his dearest and most exalted friends ; for as relatives, he hardly dared to claim them ; since his father had violated the fraternal tie, and proved himself undeserving of the title of brother, to that generous being who had fostered and protected the offspring of a treacherous, dishonourable union.

The difference in age between the cousins caused Philip early to look up to Sidney rather as an instructor and guardian, than a mere playfellow, while he regarded him with an affectionate interest the most sincere ; and if, by any circumstance, left more immediately to his charge, a care so zealous, that the fondest parent could not have been more vigilant.

The

The delicate health of this dear and only child was a source of much anxiety to both his parents; and from hence arose a degree of indulgence, that was, perhaps, not exactly rational or judicious; for although the more prominent errors of his disposition, for vices he had none, underwent the ordeal of correction, his inclinations, in many points, were suffered to maintain an unbounded sway, that rendered this beloved youth ill calculated to encounter those vexations and disappointments which, more or less, must be the portion of every *Inhabitant of Earth*, in their eventful pilgrimage of life. His understanding was neither brilliant nor vigorous; it indeed could only be classed as mediocre; while his sensibility was almost feminine, and his disposition possessed all those warm affections and confiding warmth, which were the characteristic lineaments of his father's.

His estimation of Maitland rapidly increased, till it amounted almost to idolatry;

try; and he appeared to acquire an influence over him, that even his parents could not attain; nor was his happiness ever complete where this valued and beloved friend was absent, who was at once to him the confiding companion, and the infallible counsellor; for he was, in every respect, considered as a dear and elder brother, whose opinions and advice were received with that affectionate deference that could not but prove most gratifying to the amiable Sidney.

Such was the harmony and unanimity which subsisted between the cousins, when the senior had attained his twenty-sixth year, and Philip was yet at the early age of seventeen. The viscount had been influenced by his nephew to postpone his continental tour, until a later period than would otherwise have been the case, in order that he should not be separated from his cousin, and that he might eventually accompany him, which was, in fact, highly gratifying to lady Shirley, as upon the care
and

and attention of Sidney, she was assured she could confidently rely. By the advice of the family physician, the almost constant attendant on the heir from the hour of his birth, he had been recommended to commence his travels, as they were to set off late in the autumn, to pass the early part of the winter in Portugal, the climate being well adapted to the constitution of the fondled youth; and this plan was accordingly adopted.

CHAP. X.

————— I have lov'd
Too well to treat you with indifference.

————— My disorder'd soul
Wavers between th' extremes of love and rage.
I have been too tame: I will awake to vengeance!

PHILIP.

.....

“ No hate so strong as *love* to *hatred* turn'd,
Nor hell a fury like a *woman* scorn'd.”

The Nun.

PREPARATIONS were therefore immediately set afloat; and, every arrangement completed, provided with introductory letters, our two young men arrived at Lisbon. They, of course, appeared in the first circles of fashion,

fashion, where they were everywhere received with flattering distinction. One evening that they were at the English ambassador's, they were particularly introduced to Donna Henrietta D'Estrade, as the daughter of the most intimate friend of lady Villarson, wife of his excellency.

We have already spoken of the beauty of this young Portuguese; it was exquisitely commanding; but to this face was added a form distorted in no common degree; yet flattery had played so successful a part at her toilette, that this misfortune attached to her figure was scarcely seen or felt, while the charms of her features, she was assured, were unequalled. Attracted and amused by the vivacity and fine flow of spirits which she at all times commanded, Sidney never, for a moment, deserted his station by her side during the day, in the course of which some rural parties were arranged, in which our Englishmen were politely included.

In each of these, accident, or perhaps

intention, on the one side, placed Maitland generally near the vivacious and witty Henrietta; in her conversation there was a sportive ease, and gaiety of manner, which was truly fascinating; but with such a man as she at this moment aimed to conquer, there was a masculine boldness of character, at which all the delicate emotions of his heart would have recoiled, a confidence in her own mental powers, and a vanity, under her circumstances, unpardonable, of the beauty of her features; as her personal charms certainly received a severe check in the deformity of her figure, although she was wholly unconscious of her misfortune.

Maitland was, however, the only person, if we except his cousin, who remained ignorant of the snare laid for his affections by the lovely Portuguese; and when she returned to her convent, where she was a boarder, lady Villarson frequently requested his attendance, in order to aid, as much as lay within the compass of her ability,
her

her designs. Upon one of these occasions, Sidney warmly pressed his cousin to accompany them, who, by no means inclined to go, evaded for some time his intreaties, until Sidney, half displeased at his unusual obstinacy, was quitting the house, when his arm was seized by Philip, who exclaimed — “ Dear Maitland ! do not look grave ; you know your influence over me ; and much greater sacrifices than the whim of remaining solo would be readily made to give you a moment’s pleasure. Come, I am ready to attend you ; and, by way of revenge, will certainly endeavour to monopolize the conversation of our lively Portuguese.”

“ Forgive me, Philip, for my peevishness, but, in fact, I did not like to leave you to solitude, while my own time was so pleasurablely past : so you will find,” he continued, with a smile, “ that your friend was not so selfish as you may have supposed.”

Philip was satisfied that his cousin never thought of a selfish gratification, where he

was any way interested ; so arm-in-arm they proceeded to the house of lady Villarson, and, with her ladyship, went on to the convent.

It has been a question, with a great portion of mankind, whether such a feeling as *presentiment* has, or has not, at momentous periods of human life, found entrance into the heart of man. We presume not to decide ; but certain it is, that Philip Maitland experienced a more than usual reluctance to accompany his friend upon this memorable visit ; and as certain is it, that it proved the most important æra of his hitherto blameless life. In a parlour of the convent, appropriated to the reception of visitors, with Donna Henrietta D'Estrade, he for the first time beheld with her the sister Theresa. We have already spoken of the ardent passions of this young man, which had at no time received a check, save occasionally from his faithful mentor, whose grateful attachment to the young heir seldom left his judgment under proper influence ;

ence; so that unless the fault was flagrant, it was always overseen even by him.

Without a single struggle for freedom, this young and ardent votary of love resigned his heart by a *coup de main* from the bright eyes of the fair nun; he was, however, silent upon the subject to Sidney, as he was assured that the slightest hint of this nature would be the means of instantly removing them from Portugal.

Week after week elapsed, and visits were as frequently made to the convent of St. Jago as circumstances would permit, under the aid and sanction of Henrietta, who, sensible of the influence Philip held over the heart of his cousin, wished, at any expence, to render herself useful to him, and thereby engage him, from motives of interest as well as gratitude, her friend, and, if necessary, her advocate with his relation.

The distinctive passion of love had taken full possession of the heart of the youthful Philip; his was the age for ardour; this had all the allurements of a first attach-

ment; he believed it unequalled, he believed it eternal. All the perfections of human nature he beheld pourtrayed in the eloquent features of Theresa; an angel would in vain have accused her of the frailties attendant upon mortals; the heart of Philip had deified its idol, and the homage he offered was, he conceived, but the incense due.

Lady Villarson, in the interim, had fully committed herself for the espousal of the cause of Donna Henrietta, in which she really took considerable interest. The husband of this zealous friend was one day to dine with Sidney Maitland, and a party of English, on the anniversary of their monarch's birth; the glass had, as is usual upon such occasions, past freely in the circle; and at the hour of separation, lord Villarson, who had offered to set down Mr. Maitland at his hotel, thought this a favourable opportunity to fulfil his engagement with his lady, and ascertain the real sentiments of their English acquaintance, in re-
gard

gard to their Portuguese friend: the former, astonished at the misinterpretation which had been placed upon his accidental attentions, declared, in the most decided terms; that he had never meditated for a moment any thing serious, or indeed beyond those civilities which any lady, under similar circumstances, could command from him: but when his lordship pressed upon his conviction that the lady herself, doubtless, thought otherwise, and began to expatiate at some length upon her various recommendations both of mind and person, Sidney, already elevated by the unusual excess he had that day committed, in the frequent libations upon that event which had produced the meeting, was not perhaps quite so choice in his expressions as he might otherwise have been, when he interrupted the eulogium by a declaration, that nothing was to him half so disgusting as personal deformity in a wife; and beside, that however he might and did admire female beauty, that alone could not satisfy his
ambition;

ambition; and in relation to Donna Henrietta, in particular, her very understanding, strong and nervous as he allowed it, partook too much of masculine attainments to suit his taste; and that these very acquisitions, highly desirable as they would prove under another garb, that of softness, feminine delicacy, and unassuming gentleness, lost with him their value, when delivered, as in her style, with dictatorial decision and dogmatic pertinacity; in short, he summed it all up, by saying, that although he considered her as a pleasant, cheerful, and even entertaining companion, she was the very last woman upon earth he could be induced to marry; and therefore intreated his lordship to choose any other subject, when he should be most honoured by his attention.

Lord Villarson, in reply, gave him to understand that he, in fact, had acted upon deputation; and such being his sentiments, the matter should now undoubtedly be waved.

This

This serious discussion soon evaporated the effects of the past dinner; and our Englishman, arrived at home, began seriously to reflect upon all that had occurred relative to his fair Portuguese; but feeling himself perfectly acquitted, after a strict mental investigation, he deemed an honourable retreat the best step that could now be adopted; and wishing to conceal the real cause from Philip, he sought him, at an early hour in the morning, to communicate his wish of quitting Lisbon in the course of the following week: but already had his young friend gone out on horseback; and the interview being, of course, postponed, he prepared for a visit to the boarder of the convent of St. Jago, in order civilly to announce his approaching departure, ere she should hear it from other quarters.

He was received by the fair Henriëtta in the most flattering manner; but unwilling to prolong a scene distressing to himself, and, he was led to believe, would not be

less so to her, at once broached the subject. Her agitation was indeed great; but after a few moments embarrassing hesitation, she, in very unequivocal language, made him an offer of her heart and hand. Paralyzed at the perplexing *denouement* which he had so unintentionally produced, he could only, in gentlest terms, acknowledge the unmerited honour she had done him; and with as much delicacy and politeness as his awkward situation would allow, decline the proffered hand, by stammering a hint of some prior election: this latter position was, in fact, not the case; but was merely intended to soften the refusal to her own feelings. But what was his astonishment at the effect his declaration produced upon the beautiful fury before him! rage, mortification, disappointment, wounded pride, and rebuffed affection, had robbed her lovely features of their native charms; and he gazed with dismay at the first female he had ever beheld under such influence.

A precipitate

A precipitate flight was all that was left him; and, feeling himself unable to command sufficient nerve to appear unruffled before Philip, and unwilling to discover to him the real cause, he left a message at their hotel, to say he should dine out, and avoided thereby the interview he feared.

But if Donna Henrietta D'Estrade had suffered so severely from the violence of uncontrolled passions, in the scene we have just touched on, to what a tremendous height did they arrive, when the imprudent lady Villarson gave the preceding one with her lord, strongly coloured and expatiated on with the pencil of a caricaturist! The lovely Portuguese became almost frantic, and, in this paroxysm of despair, she was left to the worst of counsellors, her own ungoverned passions! revenge was her determination, and her measures were prompt; for already was she aware that the departure of her victim would be speedy.

The attachment of the youthful companion

nion of the now detested Sidney for the the nun Theresa, she was perfectly aware of; she read his character with precision; his impetuosity, the violence of his passions, his credulity, and the indulgence to which he had his whole life been accustomed, were admirable weapons to be used for the accomplishment of her scheme; he was also the beloved friend of Sidney, his charge, his pupil, almost his idol!

Theresa, whose whole heart had long since surrendered itself to lord Creswell, regarded the attachment of the youthful Philip but as a passing impression, and only smiled at the passionate professions of her young admirer; but when the wily Henrietta pointed it out as the happy mean to effect her release from conventual seclusion, while it insured the safety of her devoted lover the object of reciprocal affection, the simple nun readily fell into the snare laid by her more artful associate; she was at once persuaded to adopt her measures; and was satisfied that while Philip

was

was the ostensible person with whom she should elope, she could, by a second manœuvre, quit her then companion; and, by placing herself beneath the protection of her affianced husband, make a valuable convenience of the one, and secure the perfect safety of both.

The female schemer soon brought her plot to maturity; the poor devoted readily promised every thing required; his beloved Sidney, his guardian friend and brother, was to be kept ignorant of the whole affair; and, eager for its accomplishment, at once agreed to all the stipulations. At the expiration of one week, was the period fixed for Theresa's adieu to her life of seclusion; and lord Creswell himself was only so far admitted as an accomplice in their plan, that he was to be ready at—— to receive his long-loved Theresa; and that no explanation could take place until that interview.

The impassioned Philip instantly set about the necessary preparations; and, as
Maitland

Maitland himself was busied in making arrangements for his departure also, which he was no less pleased than surprised to find so readily acceded to by his cousin, he became less attentive to his movements and engagements than he had ever before been at any period of his life.

All things were soon *en train*; and, by the powerful aid of Henrietta, who was uncontrolled mistress of a considerable fortune, it was all accomplished with greater facility than could possibly have been expected. Two days before the important one fixed upon, and the last interview that Henrietta dared risque with Philip for their final adjustment, he presented her with a ring, to be conveyed to his beloved Theresa, and taught her the use of a secret spring, which, separating, served for a case that inclosed a plait of hair, and concealed a plain wedding one, with this striking inscription, "*Sacred to Love, Truth, and Fidelity.*"

The eventful day at length closed in:
all

all things in darkness clad, the happy Philip stole, unperceived, to the walls of the convent of St. Jago; at the appointed signal, the wall was scaled, and he received the trembling and terrified Theresa in his arms! not a syllable, as agreed upon, was spoken, until they entered the carriage in waiting; and by heavy bribes, got on at an almost incredible pace. The young lover had not, however, wholly forgotten his companion; but had left a few lines, ambiguous in their intended meaning, and merely purposing to quiet his apprehensions for his personal safety. But when they reached the hands of the half-frantic Maitland, he felt but too well assured that where such mystery lurked, mischief was in the rear; and, summoning the *valet de place*, whom he at once suspected as an auxiliary in the business, with indescribable horror learnt the fatal truth. From accident, the note had reached its destination much sooner than Philip had expected; and, as a possibility remained of
overtaking

overtaking them, he instantly set off with that hope.

At the identical town where Creswell had been appointed to rendezvous, the distressed Maitland overtook them ; and, rushing into the room, he grasped the arm of his beloved Philip ; but, breathless with emotion, he could not articulate a syllable ; while Theresa, with a loud shriek, fled through an opposite door.

The frantic boy struggled for freedom ; but, with convulsive force, Maitland yet kept him prisoner—"What is your purpose, Philip ? relieve my distraction ! Oh ! tell me you are not a principal in this horrid business, this elopement with a nun in a Catholic country ?"

"My purpose, Sidnev, is marriage ; and for this purpose I *have* eloped with a nun ; unhand me, therefore, or renounce me for ever !"

The door flew open ; and Theresa, pale, trembling, and almost fainting, exclaimed—"Philip, for God's sake follow me ! not

an instant must be lost ! we are pursued ! the officers of the offended church are at our heels ; and to be taken now would be certain destruction !”

“ The destruction you speak of, madam,” returned the agitated and phrenzied Sidney, “ would be still more certain, if you are taken together ; remain, therefore, here for half an hour, and I pledge myself to return, let the consequence be what it may, as soon as I have secured the safety of him who is dearer than my own existence. Oh, Theresa ! exert your influence to induce him to accompany me !”

“ I have no time for explanation. For God's sake release him !” exclaimed the nun.

The terror expressed in her countenance, the agonies of Philip, and the effect of the whole scene upon the mind of Maitland, united to bereave him almost of reflection ; he relinquished his hold, at the moment that the hapless Philip, overcome by con-
tending

tending and warring emotions, sunk upon the floor senseless.

The name of "Theresa" was now vociferated in the hall; and a gentleman entering, caught her in his arms, and bore her to a carriage in waiting, ere Sidney had time to raise, from his prostrate situation, the lifeless Philip. Restoratives were at length successful; but ere the poor invalid had scarcely recovered the powers of his mind, the inn was entered by those sent in search of the fugitive nun and her paramour.

With agonies that can only be felt, the wretched Maitland was informed that his precious charge, his beloved Philip, the sole and darling child of his benefactors, was under the influence of the criminal laws of the church, for the most serious offence he could commit, and the necessity of his being instantly separated from him, as he must be forthwith resigned to their care. Could prayers, intreaties, and bribes, have availed with these emissaries of des-
potic

otic power, poor Maitland offered *all* he could command; while Philip, with cold bitterness, reproached him with his detention, at a moment when escape was possible.

Stung almost to madness, he raved with all its incoherence, when a note was placed in his hands; it was written by Theresa, and intended for Philip; but evidently indited many hours before, briefly stating her reasons for the elopement, and imploring his pardon for the perilous situation in which she had placed him. Believing that this confession would prove a salutary medicine to the disordered mind of the almost dying sufferer, 'Sidney', with a tender preparatory speech, gave him the paper; but what was his astonishment, when Philip, tearing it to atoms, strewed the floor with the fragments, as he accused him of forging it. This precious paper, which might have mitigated the sentence of the law, was thus placed beyond recall; time was no longer permitted for discussion; and the now passive youth was placed between
his

his two sentinels, as their machine drew off, and was followed by that which contained his desponding, wretched friend.

As his young companion was placed beyond his reach, the wretched Maitland returned to his hotel, there to deliberate on what steps he should pursue ; but great was his surprise to find a letter waiting his arrival, from Donna Henrietta, requesting an immediate interview, upon a matter of the last importance. Aware of the intimacy which had subsisted between her and Theresa, he hesitated not a moment in instantly complying with the invitation. His reception was politely cold ; but too miserable for observation, he intreated the promised communication, as he conceived it could only relate to the recent event which had taken place.

Henrietta, aware of all circumstances connected with her victim from her English friends, was prepared in every way for her attack ; she expatiated on what he already knew of the penalty incurred by Philip,
and

and the heinousness of the crime for which he stood fully committed, of the nun in question having actually left the Portuguese dominions, and had been assisted thereto by the very man now in custody: she harrowed up his soul by painting the agonies of his parents, when the knowledge of this event should reach them; then added —“ And what account can you, Mr. Maitland, offer of your vigilance of this precious charge committed to your care, this idol of your benefactors, this being, in whose welfare the very existence of your early friends is wrapt? They cannot avoid reflecting that his removal paves the way to your advancement; this barrier destroyed, rank, wealth, and worldly distinctions await *you*——”

“ Barbarous woman, forbear, lest I forget what is due to your sex, and vent my curses on the unfeeling heart which could give birth to so appalling a vision !”

“ One thing more, and I have done. Is it true that you held, aye, forcibly held, the
poor

poor struggling victim, when the intreaties of Theresa urged you to surrender him to her care, to guide him in safety to liberty?"

"A dagger, Henrietta, sheathed in my breast, would be mercy——"

"A figurative speech, Maitland," she returned, with bitterness; "but to put it to the test, I have the means to free your minion."

"Oh, God of Heaven, I thank thee!" cried the frantic Sidney, as he precipitated himself at her feet. "Oh, Henrietta! if ever you hope for mercy at your most trying hour——"

She interrupted him—"Spare yourself this humiliation, which I consider but as a mockery. I state my conditions; you are at liberty to reject them; and if so, no earthly power shall afterwards influence my interference—they are these. Behold this paper: I will honestly tell you it materially affects your future life; for you bind yourself, by every solemn tie that is dear to man, to comply with one condition
which

which I may demand, and to preserve inviolable secrecy thereon ; the obligation is firm, unequivocal. Do this, and I possess papers which will clearly prove that the elopement was with another ; and that Philip was innocently involved by Theresa, to cover the safety of the real culprit ; who *he* is, also remains with me ; they are completely veiled from your view ; living in obscurity under feigned names, they will no more be heard of in Portugal ; and the sacrifice to the church will be Philip Maitland ; while his *guardian*, his *protector*, his boasted *friend*, returns to his heart-broken father, who, precipitately plunged into a premature grave, leaves the space vacant to be filled by his worthy and trusty successor. I have been brief—here is the deed ; if you sign it, I commit the papers to your *honour* ; for presumptive proof will not lead me, as it would the Shirleys, to think otherwise of you ; and the boy liberated, I demand the deed at your hands,

she very hour you quit this with him in safety."

The sacrifice of *self* was a comparative trifle to the maddened Sidney; he seized the pen, and, without an instant's hesitation, signed the fatal deed.

Henrietta withdrew; and returning, placed in his hands the promised papers—"Money, Mr. Maitland, is also necessary; you may not be sufficiently provided; here is an order."

"That favour, madam, is unnecessary—I go——"

"Not without these credentials, sir; this letter, addressed to my near relation, the bishop of ———, will effectually serve you in your pursuit, otherwise the undertaking will be attended with greater difficulties than you are aware of, and much of danger to your friend."

Maitland grasped the papers; and, doubtful almost of his own existence, he rushed out of the house with the feelings of a madman.

The

The fortune of Henrietta, we have before observed, was independent, and so were her actions—an orphan of high rank, whose influence was extensive, an idolized niece to an ecclesiastic of high rank also, and one of that fraternity whose power in a Catholic country is supreme. The liberation of Philip was, therefore, immediate; and he was received with rapture to the embraces of his truly noble but self-devoted friend. In the safety of this beloved youth, Maitland soon lost all recollection of the blind sacrifice he had offered to the vindictive Portuguese; he hastened to quit a country in which he had experienced so much of ill; and they proceeded on their meditated tour through Spain, and progressively to France and Italy. But the feelings of the wretched Philip were only smothered from observation, to prey upon the source of life. Enthusiastically attached to Theresa, a conviction that she was lost to him for ever, that he had only played an useful and subordinate part to,

insure the success of a hateful rival, struck deep in the heart of the energetic boy; and, with anguish inconceivable, Sidney beheld the rapid decline of health and strength.

Despairing of relief from change of air and scene, he turned his thoughts towards England; and his young charge readily agreed to seek his native shore: their arrival soon succeeded; and the self-accusing Maitland resigned to the arms of the distressed parents his precious trust. Medical assistance was vainly resorted to; the final blow was given; the natural delicacy of Philip's constitution sunk beneath the despairing anguish of unrequited affection; he met his fate not only with resignation, but with joy, in the early dawn of manhood, with all that could attach to life; ungoverned passions had sapped the foundation of happiness; and a premature grave closed on the sorrows of Philip Maitland.

The feeble powers of his historian shrink
from

from the task of attempting to pourtray the agonies of Sidney, when he beheld the inanimate remains of his young companion. In melancholy guise, each trivial inattention to the actions or pursuits of the darling boy during their sojourn in Lisbon, was canvassed with severest self-condemnation; his well-meant but fatal resistance to the reiterated intreaties of Theresa to suffer his escape with her, preyed upon his mind with corroding effect; and for many, many months, he was an isolated member of society. Accident, at this moment, threw him in the way of Ellen Bertie; her gentle soothing manners, her amiable and companionable qualities, soon awakened him to the powerful influence of love; his desolated heart found an asylum in the tender bosom of the lovely Ellen; and the late melancholy wanderer, who had for a long lapse of time hovered over the grave of the martyred Philip, was welcomed as an inmate to the peaceful breast of innocence and truth.

The avenging fiend slept not, however,

in the intriguing wiles of the Portuguese: unseen, unsuspected, she had, at distance, watched the actions of him who had unconsciously destroyed her peace, who had awakened her to the full sense of a natural misfortune, of which flattery, adulation, and the beauty of a lovely face, had, until then, left her wholly in ignorance; and not only to slight, but decidedly to reject the unequivocal offer of her heart and hand, in a breast such as this foreigner, whose uncontrolled passions had never felt the curb of restraint, thus deeply to wound, was to create an enmity lasting as life, implacable as death. Deprived of all hope of future happiness herself, she seized, with avidity, the means of interrupting that of the man who had scorned her; like a second Shylock, she possessed the power to effect his destruction, and nothing short could satisfy her vengeance. In person then she claimed the forfeit of *the bond*; on her demand the hand of Maitland was solemnly pledged; and in *hate* was the wretched compact sealed.

CHAP. XI.

Oh! let me hunt my travell'd thoughts again;
Range the wide waste of desolate despair;
Start any hope. Alas! I lose myself,
'Tis pathless, dark, and barren all to me! OROONOKO.

The Fancy Drapery.

EIGHT months had Florence already told beneath the roof of the worthy Mrs. Wilson; habit had reconciled her to that industry from which, at first, her former idle habits had revolted, and to which nought but stern necessity had induced her pursuance: but while thus occupied, reflection had time to range at large, and its effects were the more salutary, from being severe; for as Miss Vincent now dispassionately indulged

dulged a retrospect of former events, she could not but sigh as mournfully over the past as the present; in the one she was culpable, in the other unfortunate; regret was, therefore, the attendant of both.

The young women with whom she was now associated in the fancy-dress business of Mrs. Wilson, were respectable, plain educated daughters of tradesmen. Florence could estimate them, for their industry and strict attention to propriety in their employment; but still they were not, to her, desirable companions; the refinements of her mind and manners were ill assimilated to the unpolished ignorance of theirs; and she shrank with involuntary reluctance from that familiarity and intimacy which they sought. This conduct, on her part, soon repressed their well-meant efforts to welcome her into their little circle; and one of the most offended of the group styled her "the lady workwoman;" perhaps this was no unfit appellation, for, in truth, the labour of Florence was not
adequate

adequate to that of either of her companions: still the inclination to be industrious was hers; and it was surely rather a misfortune than a crime, that the effects of an erroneous education had infused habits of indolence and ease, which impeded that activity in the mechanism of needlework, which attaches to women regularly initiated in the employment. Indeed, the wish to be useful and obliging far outstript the ability in the one case, and the other she was but seldom called to the exertion of; as she was, in almost every instance, the obliged person, from her general helplessness, in all the common concerns of life.

It may appear strange, from the well-known benevolent character of lord Shirley, that Miss Vincent should not have appealed to him, among the first of her friends, in the hour of adversity, as an immediate connexion of her family; but, in fact, no intercourse whatever had existed between this nobleman and the Vincents; the relationship of Sidney being on the

maternal side, whose sister had married Mr. Walsham, a younger brother of lady Emily Vincent; and although the viscount did not object to his nephew maintaining what intercourse he pleased with the relatives of his mother, he could not himself, of course, feel any wish to cultivate an intimacy with any branch of Mrs. Maitland's family; but, on the contrary, rather avoided an acquaintance, from its reviving those painful remembrances he wished to have for ever buried in the grave of his brother.

The health of Florence began gradually to decline, which her good-natured employer, Mrs. Wilson, observed with pain; and, as she already regarded her with partial eyes, she became anxious to adopt some plan which would not deduce from her weekly stipend, and yet might render less close attention to her needle necessary. At length she determined to send her out occasionally to shops for the purchase of those articles she stood in need of: this benevolent intention had the desired

sired effect; and the invalid actually received that benefit which had been looked to, without being conscious of the source from whence it sprang.

One day, that she had just returned from an errand of this description, she found Mrs. Wilson equipped for a walk, which she had been prevented from pursuing by sudden indisposition. With real interest, Florence tenderly inquired the cause, and assisted the invalid to reach her chamber, which she had no sooner done, than Mrs. Wilson told her, she should be greatly obliged by her accompanying one of the work-girls, who stood with a bandbox in her hand, to the house of a lady in Welbeck-street, whom she had promised to attend with some trimmings for a new dress, to be put on by herself upon her customer, after the duties of the toilette were otherwise completed, but that her illness had detained her so far beyond the promised period, that she must now take a coach, in order to save as much time as possible; for, unfortunately,

fortunately, few women of fashion admitted apologies from people in her way of life, even if as ample as that she had to offer in the present case.

Unpleasant, and even painful as the commission was, Florence could not well decline its performance; she therefore acquiesced, with as good a grace as she could assume, and received, with perfect attention, all the necessary directions for placing the ornaments to the best advantage: with many injunctions from Mrs. Wilson to remember she was her substitute, and not to omit every possible respect to the lady, whom she feared she had kept waiting, she at length dispatched her representative, with her little attendant, in a hackney-coach.

Arrived in Welbeck-street, the girl alighted; and, ringing at the bell, the door was opened by a female, whose angry countenance proclaimed a storm—"Stand out of the way, Joseph, stand out of the way, I say!" she vociferated, as she pushed aside a dapper

dapper little footman in his best livery ; “ this woman comes to me, and a pretty time she has kept me dancing attendance upon her. Pray, ma’am,” she added, turning to our alarmed heroine, “ pray, ma’am, what have you got to say for yourself? here have we been waiting for an hour and a half for this here trumpery drapery ; and now you are come, it is so late, that there will be no time to put it on ; the carriage has been standing at the door, till the coachman says his horses will be killed, and all for your vagaries.”

“ Illness alone——” cried Florence.

“ Fiddle faddle stuff,” interrupted the enraged Abigail ; “ tell none of your falsehoods to me ; I don’t believe one word of it ; but walk up stairs, walk up to the dressing-room, and tell what you have got to say there, for it is all lost here upon me.”

With agitated steps, Miss Vincent followed her as she ascended the stairs ; and, throwing open the door, she exclaimed, in

continued

a half

a half whisper in her ear—"There, now, I told you how it would be! look, there's my lady drawing on her gloves; and I am sure now you'll be sent back as you came."

Florence did, indeed; "look there;" for what was the emotion of the trembling girl, when, in the lady ~~she~~ ^{she} was sent to dress, she beheld her old friend Ellen Bertie, and by her side sat Horace Bentinck, playing with her fan! she would have attempted instant escape, but, petrified with astonishment, she remained rooted to the spot. Her veil was of thick muslin; but Ellen did not turn; she merely exclaimed—"You are too late, Mrs. Wilson; I waited until the last moment, in hope of your arrival; but, at length, despairing of it, I have substituted another dress."

"This is not Mrs. Wilson, ma'am," cried the obtrusive *femme de chambre*; "it is only one of her apprentices; for she says her mistress is ill."

"I am sorry to hear it," resumed Ellen, adjusting

adjusting her tucker. "Now, dear Bentina, my fan, and I am ready. But pray how long has poor Mrs. Wilson been ill?"

"Only a few hours, madam," replied the trembling Florence. The start of Bentina at the sound of her voice electrified her, though his wife appeared not to recognize it: terrified at the bare possibility of a discovery, she turned abruptly, and quitted the room, with emotions she had never felt before.

With precipitate steps she had nearly reached the stairs, when the exclamation of—"Gracious God! 'tis Florence Vincent! I cannot be mistaken! Florence, dear Florence, hear me!" was uttered in the well-known accents of Bentina, as her hand was clasped in his. Staggering, she leant against the banisters for support, and resisted the effort he made to fold her to his bosom. They were now joined by the astonished Ellen, who, tenderly embracing, drew her back to the dressing-room she had just quitted, as the astounded waiting-maid,

waiting-maid, not comprehending the extraordinary scene before her, was curtseying her way out of it. Innumerable were the questions proposed, and kindly sympathizing the professions of Ellen; she insisted that her old friend should remain where she was, and immediately offered to dispatch an apology to the dinner-party; but as this was not permitted by her unexpected visitor, it was at length adjusted, that they should all ascend the carriage, and that, after the Bentincks had been set down at the house where they were engaged, it should proceed with Florence to Mrs. Wilson's; and the next day she assented to accept a pressing invitation to dinner.

This being agreed upon, they proceeded to the hall door; but just as Ellen had placed her foot upon the step of the carriage, the impatient horses moved forward; she slipped, and fell with such violence, that her ankle bent under her, and was so severely sprained, that she was carried back in the arms of her husband, fainting with
pain,

pain, to her own chamber : remedies were applied, with but little success ; the foot, considerably increased in size, was with difficulty released from the stocking, and the apology was now unavoidable ; Bentinck, however, undertook, at her request, to make it in person ; and the friends were left *tête-à-tête*.

The mind of Florence was considerably soothed by the friendly, and even affectionate recognition of her early associate ; and although she had firmly resolved to resist every overture that would place her in a state of dependence, yet it was truly grateful to her lacerated feelings, that a home, under the roof that now sheltered her, had been most affectionately pressed upon her acceptance.

Bentinck returned at an early hour, and informed Florence that he had detained the carriage to convey her home (after he found her determined to decline the offer of a chamber for that night) ; and as the early hours of Mrs. Wilson's house had already,

ready been intruded upon, she took an affectionate leave of Ellen, and was bidding adieu to her husband, when she was interrupted by the former; who exclaimed—
“No, my dear friend, it is impossible to suffer your return home at this hour alone; accept, therefore, the protection of major Bentinck, who, you see, has already taken up his gloves for that purpose; do not hesitate, for you will really make me unhappy for your safety if you do.”

Vain, indeed, was all opposition; and, much against her inclinations, the major followed her down stairs, and stepping into the carriage after her, ordered it to Mrs. Wilson's. A silence of some minutes ensued, interrupted only by the heavy and profound sighs of Horace: at length, gently taking her hand, he attempted raising it to his lips. Florence, in some displeasure, withdrew it.

“This is unkind, my dear friend; when a wife throws temptation in the way of a frail mortal, it is surely sufficient sanction

to

to take advantage of it: but do not misinterpret me; I only mean the innocent indulgence you forbid: this dear hand, which I so often have pressed to my lips, which I once so fondly hoped——”

“ Surely, major Bentinck, you forget our relative situations! I would willingly afford you that excuse, for it would, indeed, grieve me to imagine, but for a moment, that you could mean to offend me.”

“ If such an impression could have been made, ah, dear Florence, how greatly would you have wronged me! my love means not to take the habit of offence.”

“ By naming it, sir, it assumes that garb. Unable, at this moment, to release myself from what is so insulting to my own dignity, I even yet trust I have only to remind you of that circumstance, to free myself from allusions at once injurious to my feelings, and my sense of propriety.”

This check seemed to take effect: Bentinck apologized; but, in so doing, he still did not renounce the subject which had
given

given rise to it; and the stopping of the carriage at Mrs. Wilson's, was one of the most joyful moments she had long experienced. Hastily bidding him good-night, she ran into the house; and, after receiving satisfactory accounts of the amended health of the mistress of it, proceeded to her own chamber, where, throwing herself into a chair, her full heart found relief in a burst of tears. The various causes for even unusual agitation, had considerably deranged her nerves; and in vain she courted the aid of sleep. Gratified by the affection of Ellen, she could have dwelt with inexpressible pleasure upon the only subject which had long occurred to her to excite it, if her image had not been accompanied by that of Bentineck, whose late conduct had both afflicted and mortified her; for although she no longer wished to retain his affections, his esteem and regard were yet valuable in her eyes: but reflection upon the conversation which had so recently taken place, became at length softened into something

something of a less painful nature than the feeling which had been first impressed, by the recollection that, as he had dined out, it was more than probable he had sacrificed too largely to the bottle, to be aware of the nature of that conversation he had ventured upon ; and much was the consolation she derived from this reflection. Exhausted beyond what she had long felt, her sleep was so profound, that the kind Mrs. Wilson, who had herself come up to thank her for her solicitude during her late indisposition, would not disturb it, to make those inquiries curiosity, or a more laudable interest, had excited, from the report of her little companion of the preceding evening, and the, to her, inexplicable event of her having been returned home in the carriage of the lady whose dress she had been sent to decorate.

A note, however, from the lady in question, which required an answer, compelled her at length to disturb the slumbers of her indulged workwoman, and Florence opened

opened her eyes upon the hand-writing of Ellen; it contained a request that she would name an early hour for the carriage to attend her, in order that she might fulfil her engagement of the day before; she professed herself better, although still in much pain from her accident; and concluded with assurances of most affectionate interest on her behalf.

Florence, feeling that she owed much to Mrs. Wilson's maternal kindness, placed the letter in her hand, as a voucher for the propriety of her conduct, remembering, with renewed pain, the cruel surmises, and consequent assertions, of the unjust Mrs. Benson; and having received a smiling permission to accept the invitation from Mrs. Bentinck, she arose, and, dispatching an answer to her letter, prepared to follow it in person.

Arrived in Welbeck-street, she was ushered into the dressing-room of her friend, whom she found still unable to quit it; her greeting was as cordial as had been their parting;

parting; and, avoiding all painful retrospection, they conversed only of the pleasures of the past, until the hour of six brought home the major, and interrupted their *tête-à-tête*.

When dinner was announced, Florence was inconceivably distressed, when, after various efforts, Mrs. Bentinck declared her total inability to bear a removal, and jocularly requested the old friends would take charge of each other, as it was impossible for her to preside at the table, which as soon as they had dismissed, she would readily readmit them to her presence. The major received the hand his wife yet held in her own, and, gaily kissing it, assured her of his wishes to exert himself to the utmost to obey her commands; and they proceeded to the dining-room together.

The awkwardness of poor Florence's situation, she was so truly sensible of, that it threw an air of embarrassment over her manners, which did not pass unobserved by her companion, though its source was

placed to a far different account than the real one; ascribing the impropriety of his past conduct to the score of inebriety, she feared to notice it by adopting too much reserve, lest it should give rise to an impression that she looked to its renewal, when he might possibly no longer remember it; and she felt equally apprehensive of passing it over in silence, and adopting no change of conduct towards him, lest he should misconstrue it into encouragement: divided between two opinions, her situation became a truly painful one; nor was her confusion lessened, when, leading her to the head of the table, he requested she would do him the honour of taking that seat; the manner gave effect to the compliment, which, though nothing in itself, yet accompanied with an expressive look, and a tender pressure of the hand, carried more force than she conceived came within the bounds of propriety.

As soon as the servants could possibly be dismissed from attendance, they were so,
when

when Bentinck, drawing his chair near to the trembling Florence, left her not long doubtful of his real character. With elaborate professions of the fervor of undiminished passion, he dared breathe in her ear the most infamous proposition ; the regard of Ellen for her, he rendered the chief instrument of his villanous design ; the pressing invitation she had given her to reside with them, he earnestly implored her to accept ; at the same time, he assured her of his determination to secure her so ample an independence, that if whim, caprice, or inclination on her side, for no such casualty could arise on his, should hereafter lead to a separation, she would, in that event, be fully secured from the frowns of Fate ; and crowned the whole, by offering to bind himself, by the most solemn obligations, to render her his, by a legitimate tie, if kind fortune should, at any future period, emancipate him from his present bondage.

That the wretched girl had remained silent throughout this harangue, proceeded

from total inability to articulate a single syllable. The mask thus effectually removed, she gazed with horror upon him she had once preferred to all mankind ; she felt too much to express those feelings ; but, struggling for composure, she rose from her seat with an air of dignity, that appalled her libertine companion, as she replied—" The apology, major Bentinck, if such conduct admitted of any palliative, the remains of that esteem with which I once regarded you, last night offered on your behalf, was the hope that the engagements of the day had induced too large a sacrifice at the table to leave you master of your own actions, and that the effects of wine had, for a moment, permitted that lapse of reason, to which alone I could impute the insult then offered me ; but if I could have imagined it possible to have been but the commencement of a systematic plan, be assured I would not again have exposed myself to the possibility of beholding so contemptible an instance of human depravity !

pravity ! Spare yourself, sir, the abject attitude you have assumed, or transfer it to your injured and most respectable wife, to whom I now go : well may the dissembling hypocrite tremble ; but for *her* sake, your secret is safe : presume not to follow me, lest indignation taking the lead, I forget my more prudent resolve, and exhibit, in his proper colours, the man who has outraged the laws of hospitality twice, and who has dared to insult an indigent and unprotected female, because she is so !”

Florence, too much agitated immediately to venture into the presence of Ellen, seated herself a few minutes in an adjoining room to recover composure, having left major Bentinck to digest as he might the severity with which her reply had been clothed ; while he, conscious of the light in which he must appear in the eyes of insulted chastity, was suffering all the bitterness of self-reproach, the severest punishment which human nature can sustain.

Fortunately for poor Florence, she had

learned, from past disastrous events, in some measure to command her feelings, and render them in a degree submissive to circumstance, when circumstance did not militate against her more virtuous and estimable emotions. She was now fully aware that the happiness of her friend was at stake ; for, although convinced that resentment on both sides had been the basis of this connexion, still she deemed the impression rather an additional cause for dread, than if a more tender sentiment existed, since esteem being the sole ligament which could bind Ellen to Bentinck, it doubly behoved her not to destroy the last link of domestic unanimity.

There is nothing more difficult, as well as painful, than the necessity of practising the slightest deception towards a friend ; and the ingenuous heart of Miss Vincent sighed beneath this last trial of torturing effort.

“ I have been busied, my dear girl,” said Mrs. Bentinck, as she re-entered the room,
“ in

“ in a train of reflections since you left me, and have arranged the whole group to my entire satisfaction ; nor will I permit you to spoil the little web of felicity I have spun in Fancy’s happiest colours, for I trust it will enclose a trio of sincere and tender friends. Nay, now no reference to such little obstacles as you ventured this morning ; indeed I must arrange every thing after my own plan.”

The fluttering pulse of expiring hope agitated the bosom of poor Florence ; she felt how difficult was the path which circumstance had alone left for her pursuit ; and, delicately apprehensive of giving birth to suspicion connected with Bentinck, she stood for a moment mute and irresolute. At length, affectionately pressing the hand of Ellen between her own, while the tears trembled in her eyes, she faintly articulated—“ Such a scheme of felicity, my beloved Ellen, I dare not even hope to realize ! Fate has marked another course

for me ; do not then pain me by a flattering future I can never attain."

"Florence," returned the former, "what is this fastidious pride that operates to your rejection of my schemes? Alas! my dear girl, we must all, in life's checquered course, some time or other, feel the necessity of support from friendship; we cannot expect to be always independent creatures: yes, Florence, at this very moment I will candidly acknowledge myself dependent upon you;" and she looked expressively at her as she subjoined,

"The grief that does not speak,

Whispers the o'erfraught heart, and bids it break."

"Alas! dear Ellen, too well can I apply those lines to my own feelings; my course has been marked with adversity, and my school has indeed been that of misery! but a sad indulgence in frivolity, folly, caprice, and a train such as may be expected to follow them, in early life occupied my
mind,

mind, to the exclusion of more worthy inmates; and if I am too sensitive to the reverse of scenery I have experienced, it is perhaps not difficult to trace the spring. But with you the aspect of fortune is different; reject not then, my friend, what is within your grasp, by seeking to attain more than the lot of humanity allows; be satisfied with the blessings you possess, and resign all expectation of unadulterate felicity."

"And yet once I dared indulge that delusive dream! but ah, my friend, amid all your misfortunes, your heart has still been free; it has never known the cruel bondage of Love's dominion; it has never had to weep the destruction of its dearest object; nor yet, amid the rush of torturing resentment, to shudder at the horrid fate which attended his untimely death."

"Gracious God!" exclaimed our alarmed orphan, "what can I infer? Sidney Maitland! for to him you must allude; that dear unfortunate friend has then in death

received a termination of those mysterious sorrows which appeared so cruelly to haunt his mind !”

The silence, the tears, the despairing expression of feature in the countenance of Ellen, confirmed the sad idea ; and the affectionate heart of Florence experienced another pang, at the painful intelligence of the demise of one so sincerely regarded.

“ My present emotion,” resumed Mrs. Bentinck, after a considerable uninterrupted pause, “ will too plainly evince to you, that my attachment to Sidney Maitland has never been superseded ; for alas ! a husband claims no pre-eminence in my bosom ! under these circumstances, I should never have married, had I not every reason to be convinced that Bentinck was equally indifferent as myself, and that we met on fair and equitable ground ; but when I thus acted, my friend, I did not compound for the coldly suspicious husband ; I imagined that he would be too careless and indifferent to analyze the state of my heart,
if

if my actions were guided by that propriety and chastity which my principles would secure ; but I was mistaken ; and he who can range unfettered in the wilds of dissipation, and amuse the hour with a passing favourite, would command each look, each word, each movement of his wife ; he would be the miser of her affections, yet the prodigal of his own : Horace has been too much the man of successful gallantry and intrigue, to have confidence in woman ; and although I am far, very far from conceiving he has ever been, or ever will be the systematic seducer, or the depraved sensualist, still he has lived too gay, too free a life, easily to become the domestic companion, or the confiding husband : and even had he married to the object of his dearest affections, hers might not have been the happier fate, since such is his disposition, that he would be even jealous of her influence over himself, and be tormented with apprehensions, lest the strength of his own attachment should blind him to her

frailty ; for error and folly he believes the natural appendages of woman ! Such, my dear girl, is the character of my husband ; and in every other situation of life save that, I believe he would shine conspicuously great : but I again repeat, Bentinck is not formed for connubial life ; it would, under no circumstances, secure his happiness, or bestow it on his wife. That he has loved you, that he still passionately loves you, Florence, I am perfectly aware ; and pardon me, my dear friend, if I venture to surmise, that this is the source of your objection to residing with us ; but convinced as I am, from your positive rejection of his certainly unexceptionable proposals of marriage, that no reciprocity of affection has ever subsisted, I see no reason why this should operate. I have," she continued, deeply sighing, " no desire to win the heart of Horace, even were it in my power, since his attachment would rather oppress and disturb me, for my bosom is cold to second love ; and I firmly rest on the nice and
delicate

delicate sense of honour which marks the worldly character of major Bentinck, together with the proud estimation in which he holds his own rectitude, to secure you from the slightest unpleasant reference to his feelings; while the course of ceaseless dissipation he is in the habit of pursuing will render him but seldom our companion; and we, my beloved friend, will enjoy the only gratification which Fate appears to have reserved for us, that of mutual confidence, and reciprocal sympathy; you will be my only consolation, my only comfort. Oh, Florence! speak, tell me you will not desert a miserable, wretched wife!"

The half-distracted orphan threw herself on the bosom of Ellen, and they mutually wept in the arms of each other. But painful indeed was the task to refuse the boon implored, though the impossibility of acquiescence placed it happily beyond her deliberation. She soothed, in gentlest accents, the interesting mourner, she pointed out to her the path of duty, and gently

condemned the grounds upon which she had acted, in assuming the sacred character of wife; but all was lost in despairing gloom. The wretched Ellen seemed to have placed her only hope for the future on Florence; and poor Florence was fated to wield the additional pang, which was alone wanting to complete her miseries.

The embarrassment, however, which overshadowed the manner of Miss Vincent, as she was compelled to decline the arrangements of her friend, at length awakened a painful apprehension in the bosom of Mrs. Bentinck; she began to fear that Florence was not so indifferent to Horace, as she had from circumstances hitherto been led to conclude; but that her heart acknowledged for him a latent interest, which induced her so anxiously to avoid his presence. This idea was, however, but vague and indefinite; still it was sufficient to shock and distress poor Ellen, who almost accused herself as responsible for her unhappiness; since, if she had not accepted
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what she knew to be his desperate proposals, in a moment of rash resentment, he might still have been free to shelter Florence from that poverty and dependence to which she was now reduced.

Miss Vincent surmised but too correctly the inference which had been drawn from her strange and perplexed objections to becoming an inmate beneath the roof of major Bentinck; but with a native generosity of character, she preferred that her friend should place her present conduct to the account of a weakness, and doubt of the firmness of her own heart, rather than she should discover the real source to exist in the culpability and unworthiness of a husband, whom she already appeared to regard but too lightly, whose errors she was ill inclined to palliate, and for whom she certainly felt no one sentiment calculated to rivet the happiness, or even comfort of domestic life.

Florence, however, still hoped to preserve her from the horror of absolute contempt

tempt and detestation ; for, aware of the lofty character of each party, she trembled for the effects of open aversion on the part of Mrs. Bentinck, which she knew would inevitably ensue ; and, thus acting with newly-acquired prudence, mingled with a spontaneous tenderness of feeling, Miss Vincent yet suffered her friend to continue in error as to the source of her conduct.

Major Bentinck did not again appear that evening ; and, as early as circumstances authorized, our hapless orphan sought her humble home. But sleepless was the night which ensued, for Florence had indeed cause for reflection ; and she shuddered over the recollection, that had not adversity modelled her heart to more of rationality in its pursuits and affections, Bentinck might even, at this moment, have been a dangerous object to her peace, though she trusted, under no circumstances, to those virtuous principles which are the best and surest defence of female dignity.

Under the plea of indisposition, Florence

rence ventured to request breakfast should be sent up to her in her own chamber, in preference to joining her customary companions at that meal : this was readily complied with ; and the worthy Mrs. Wilson herself came to her to inquire the nature of her indisposition, and offer the best advice in her power for its alleviation. This attention, however friendly and well meant, was certainly ill-timed ; yet Florence expressed herself as she really felt, grateful for the motive, although she was relieved when its effects were past.

Having, however, spent the last day exempt from employment, Florence recollected the necessity of being doubly diligent on this ; and *malgré* inclination, at length prepared to descend to her daily occupation, when her steps were arrested by the delivery of a letter. She turned pale at the sight of the writing ; again she retreated into her own apartment, and, throwing the letter on the table, resigned herself to renewed distress. It was indeed
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from major Bentinck; the seal and superscription equally proclaimed it; and our orphan trembled at this implied prosecution of his infamous proposals: to return it unopened, was what appeared as likely the most to evince the contempt and detestation which the conduct of the writer inspired; but how was this to be effected? since Ellen was too intimately acquainted with her hand-writing to be deceived in it; and after the newly-raised idea which the mind of Mrs. Bentinck had embraced the preceding evening, what inference could she draw from a correspondence between her husband and friend, but one the most derogatory to the virtue and principles of Florence, under past and present circumstances of poverty? yet, did she attempt to disguise the writing, would it not imply fears, which might authorize the temerity and presumption of the libertine husband?

In this cruel dilemma, as the letter yet lay on her dressing-table, and the eyes of
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the unfortunate girl were averted, as if her very heart recoiled from beholding a proof of dishonour and perfidy in him she had once so fondly estimated, a low knock at her chamber-door compelled her to answer the appeal for admission ; yet she felt relieved on finding it was not Mrs. Wilson, but only one of the little errand-girls, to inform her a lady was in the parlour, who wished to see her, but had delivered no name.

Miss Vincent naturally concluded this visitor could be no other than Mrs. Bentinck herself ; and effort was again assayed to meet her friend with subdued agitation, for she was, in truth, certainly at this moment no desirable companion ; as Florence felt all the embarrassment of her situation, she dreaded erroneous construction from her confusion and evident distress, and yet feared a discovery of the real source ; still the claims of friendship were vivid in the breast of our heroine, and with assumed composure, she prepared to descend to the
room

room of reception. But Fate had decreed that, at this moment, one little drop of comfort should be infused into the chalice of misfortune, which had for so many tedious months been the portion of poor Florence; for it was in the arms of a friend, a dear and grateful friend, that she now was folded, and that being was the amiable Portuguese, whom the benevolence of the youthful mistress of Trent Abbey had rescued from indigence and misery, to become eventually her support and solace in this hour of painful emergency.

With distress, however, Agnes beheld the ravages of sickness and of sorrow on the once-blooming brilliant beauty; but, fearing the effect, carefully concealed her own apprehensions from the lovely invalid. Their conversation could only be a restrained one, as several of the apprentices were in the room at work. Agnes, therefore, soon proposed that her friend should accompany her in an airing in the park, when she pro-
fessed

fessed her intention of communicating all those particulars respecting herself, which she was, no doubt, desirous of knowing, since she had been the happy instrument of giving them birth: but although truly anxious to receive from her similar intelligence, she hinted not at the past in what related to the affairs of the inhabitants of Trent Abbey, lest she should distress her woe-worn friend.

Florence readily accepted the invitation; and retiring to equip herself for the drive, encountered the smiling Mrs. Wilson, who had just quitted the door, where she had been attentively examining the arms and appendages of the elegant equipage in waiting.

Our orphan blushed at the recollection of still remaining thoughtlessness, in the independent conduct she had for the last few days adopted; and was now fully sensible of the cause for astonishment to the good woman, who certainly could not account for such contradictory appearances

as suddenly attached to her; she therefore faintly smiled, as, gratefully pressing her hand, she exclaimed—"My dear Mrs. Wilson, I feel truly obliged for the indulgence you have shewn me, ever since I have received the protection of your roof, but more particularly am I indebted to your kindness within the last week; I shall not however encroach much longer upon the benevolence of your disposition; this is the last day I shall allow myself; to-morrow I return to the work-room, where my diligence shall lead you to forget the many idle hours I have recently stolen."

CHAP. XII.

I've been surpris'd in an unguarded hour;
But must not now go back; the love that lay
Half smother'd in my breast, has broke through all
Its weak restraints, and burns in its full lustre;
I cannot, if I would, conceal it from thee. ADDISON.

The Illegitimate.

OUR heroine was no longer a devotee to the toilette; and being consequently soon equipped, returned to the room where she had left Agnes, and then accompanied her to the carriage, which, from the sable liveries of attendants, she concluded to be that of Mrs. Maitland; and anxious to gain more particulars of the hapless fate of Sidney, than she had ventured to inquire of
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the heart-broken Ellen, she at once entered upon the melancholy theme to the kind Portuguese.

Agnes having minutely recounted the dreadful accident which had terminated the life of Mr. Maitland, together with those particulars of his unfortunate misguided widow, which she considered herself at liberty to relate, then acquainted Florence that it was through the medium of the Fenners she had at last gained a clue to reach her, which she had long most sedulously, but vainly sought; and, having touched upon all that she deemed more immediately interesting to her friend, proceeded to detail the remaining little incidents of her life, as connected with the family of Somerton, for which purpose it was necessary she should refer to past days, and give some account of the senior branches of that house.

Godfrey, late earl of Somerton, left two sons; the elder, who succeeded him, we have hitherto distinguished by his father's title;

title; the composition of his mind was tyranny, pride, rancour, and unbending arrogance; his fortune was unincumbered and large; and ample were his means for the indulgence of those unworthy traits of character we have pictured.

Edmund, the younger, a soldier of dragoons, was lively, careless, sufficiently thoughtless and inconsiderate to plunge into guilt ere he suspected error, and constantly at open variance with the worldly opinions and pursuits of his brother; notwithstanding which, he certainly possessed all the affections with which Nature had gifted the earl. The latter soon formed a matrimonial alliance; and as the election of the heart had ever been with him a matter of derision, this union had been completed according to his undeviating practice; consequently birth, connexions, and fortune, were combined in the new-made countess. Edmund had ever been accustomed to unlicensed pursuits in the field of gallantry; devoted to the fair sex,
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he had associated but too much with the least amiable-part, and had forsworn any attempt to realize connubial happiness, sensible of the versatility and inconstancy of his own nature, and justly appreciating the conduct and principles of the married libertine.

At the age of twenty-four, he encountered, at the fashionable boarding-table of Buxton, a modern Eloise, who, like himself, disclaimed the trammels of legal connexion: Edmund was enchanted; she possessed the dangerous gift of beauty, with a mind formed from romance, of contagious and destructive tendency, having been left by *a novel-writing mother* to her own selection of reading. The eventual consequence was an elopement, at a moment when a discovery of the nature of her acquaintance with the elegant and seductive Edmund would inevitably have been otherwise made to the world of her sphere. The wretched and misguided girl had an only brother in the Guards; he pursued her
paramour,

paramour, and a duel was the result. Edmund was brought home apparently dead, and covered with blood, upon a hurdle, borne thither by the humanity of some haymakers, who were accidentally passing through the field to their morning work at the awful moment. Having delivered the wounded man into safe hands, the victor stepped into the chaise in waiting, and disappeared. The peasants bore their bleeding charge to the house he occupied; his fair companion, terrified at the awful and unexpected sight, was conveyed to her chamber in convulsions; a few hours gave birth to a son, and terminated the existence of his hapless mother.

It was some weeks ere the attendants ventured to declare the real situation of affairs, or the unfortunate fair one's untimely fate, to the miserable Edmund. His heart was the seat of many virtues; and he had erred rather from the want of a proper education, and the habit of acting more from impulse, than from innate depravity: his

wounds burst out afresh; alarming symptoms presented themselves; and an express was sent off for his brother: ere his arrival, appearances were yet more unfavourable; and, convinced that his final dissolution was near, he bequeathed, in solemn terms, his infant orphan to his care, imploring, with bitter tears of remorse and regret, that the poor boy might suppose himself the illegitimate offspring of the earl, by which means he would be enabled with great ease to arrange whatever might relate to him, and thereby acquire from the asserted relationship more perfect and implicit acquiescence in his commands and decisions, with regard to his future disposal. The promise was faithfully given; and the repentant dying father having baptized his son by his own name, expired in a few days after the event.

The infant was given in charge to a very respectable woman, the wife of a serjeant in major Edgecombe's regiment, who, with the child, followed the earl to town, her husband

husband having accompanied the corps abroad ; while the allowance for the care of the child was sufficiently ample to induce her to consent to a temporary separation by remaining in England.

With Mrs. Hamblyn, the little Edmund passed his three first infant years ; during that time, lord Somerton had also become the father of two sons and one daughter ; and the orphaned Oswald being now removed to his mansion, the four children were brought up together, nor at that time was the slightest distinction made ; for in the only instance where rectitude or generosity marked the character of lord Somerton, we must not omit to afford him the full merit which attached to the conduct he observed towards his late brother's offspring, whose education throughout had been the same as that of the presumptive heir of his house.

Lady Susan was five years the junior of the youngest, as her birth immediately succeeded the death of the then only
M 2 daughter

daughter of the earl, which took place two years after the admission of Edmund into the family. She had, therefore, just reached the thirteenth anniversary of her natal day, when the young men prepared for their continental tour: the heart of Susan had, from earliest infancy, acknowledged the unvaried affection and kindness of Oswald, whom she had been taught by her father to believe an indigent and unfortunate dependent upon him; but had never known the particulars attached to his situation, or by what means he had become so. On the other hand, he had ever fondly loved the pretty Susan, and never so delighted as when opportunity was afforded him of contributing to her amusement or benefit; and already his happiest hours were those which were spent with his little favourite.

The earl dreamt not of consequences; his girl was scarcely out of her nursery, and Oswald believed himself his son. A Mr. Fairfax, a fellow collegian, of slender fortune,

fortune, was their constant companion ; but became, as years advanced, more particularly the bosom friend of Henry Edgcombe, lord Somerton's youngest son.

They made the projected tour, and returned to England in time to be in the train at lady Susan's presentation. Oswald beheld with rapture the improvements which had taken place in the interesting companion of his past life during his absence from England. She danced, and his eager eyes involuntarily followed her footsteps ; she sang, and every sense seemed condensed in that of hearing ; she laughed and chatted with him, and he forgot all else. But the period approached which was to arouse him from this torpid state of imagined security : he suddenly became alarmed at his own feelings ; the cause appeared in overtures of marriage, which had been made to lord Somerton in behalf of his daughter. The thunderstruck Edmund attempted to analyze them, to search the folds of his own heart for the source of

that distraction which had seized him on the first intimation he had received of this event; he saw not, he thought not of, he suspected not his danger; but what were his agonies at discovering that he had fatally deceived himself with a reliance on fraternal affection? With horror, that shook every fibre, he acknowledged that Susan was far dearer to him than life, for bereft of her, all became chaotic darkness.

Dismayed at his situation, he felt indeed that desperate remedies were necessary, and, therefore, determined to solicit for a commission in the army, and instantly, and for ever, to quit a place he now beheld with indescribable emotion; but if he were miserable before, how much more was it increased, by hearing from the innocent lips of Susan, her feelings at the idea of a separation from him! too sure it was, that she viewed him with similar impressions to those he entertained for her.

Delay was now unmanly; if he assumed a right to trifle with his own feelings, he

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was convinced he had no such plea to offer in extenuation, when extended to those of another; his measures were consequently prompt. Hasty, agitated, distracted was the parting adieu to his lovely relative, when, having obtained his commission, he quitted her to join his regiment.

A secret expedition was talked of, and he was one of those destined to be launched upon it: time appeared to pass with leaden wings, for he longed for the moment of embarkation. No further orders, however, arrived; hope had realized the probability that his first campaign might become his last: three months, however, rolled their heavy course, and all expectation vanished into air, for they were marched into country quarters.

One day after parade, he was invited to a small party at the house of the adjutant, a very worthy and respectable man, much esteemed by the regiment. Oswald accepted the card, the first he had complied with since his arrival, having so often de-

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clined

clined similar ones, that he was voted a strange eccentric misanthrope, and unworthy the attention of the ladies of his regiment. Upon approaching the wife of his new friend, the adjutant, who had but two days before joined her husband in his present quarters, for the ceremony of an introduction, the lady started, all colour forsook her cheeks, and with strongest emotion, she inquired if he were any way connected with the family of the earl of Somerton?

The suffusion of mortified pride flushed his face, and averted his eyes as he acknowledged a relationship. The trembling hand of the interrogator grasped his as she added—" Suppress those feelings my question may have given birth to ; I must endeavour to recover my own. Take an opportunity of calling upon me to-morrow by two o'clock ; and suffer what has passed to go by without observation."

Astonished at conduct so extraordinary, for which he could no way account, tedi-

ous were the hours which detained him with the party; anxious and distressing those of the succeeding night; for in vain did Oswald endeavour to obtain a clue to this strange recognition of an evidently former acquaintance; all was enveloped in confusion: her features dwelt upon memory, and certainly reminded him of some pleasing impression; but doubt and uncertainty rested on his mind.

The morning dawned; with its earliest harbinger he arose. Two o'clock would never arrive! he attempted various means of intervening amusement—nothing could interest. As the clock of a neighbouring church struck two, the knocker of the door to the adjutant's house resounded with the appeal for admission; Oswald ascended the stairs; the lady received him, in the literal sense, with open arms, to his utter astonishment, confusion, and disappointment; for, in his opinion, regardless of decorum, the difference of age and sex, she threw herself upon his bosom as soon as

the drawing-room door was closed, and pressed him with fervor to her breast. At his cold and retreating air, she appeared mortified and shocked, and, bursting into tears, bedewed his cheeks with the soft balm of female weakness, as she exclaimed—“ My dear beloved Edmund ! have you indeed forgotten your foster-mother ? ”

The youth in a moment recalled to memory the good and kind Mrs. Hamblyn, though somewhat altered by years, and change of climate: he in his turn now became affectionate; he folded the tender and excellent guardian of his infancy in the respectful embrace of a son; and having, again and again, thanked her for past unremitting kindness, they were both at length reduced to rationality.

Mrs. Jarvis informed him that upon the death of her first husband, she had been addressed by him whose name she now bore, who had long been attached to her; but as he was a proud man, and would have been greatly mortified that her former

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mer situation should become known, she dared not acknowledge her foster-child, either to him or the regiment.

Oswald gave a concise account of the past, until, in speaking of the earl's family, it became necessary, or he deemed it so, to excuse to himself the infringement of his mental vow, and speak of lady Susan Edgecombe; but the faltering voice, the varying cheek, the pallid lip, the agitation of the whole frame of the speaker, proclaimed, in the language of nature, the deepest interest; and the experienced Mrs. Jarvis rallied him on the discovery she had made.

The agonized heart of her companion bounded at the appeal; he shuddered with horror, for he conceived such an impression no subject for mirth; and, with indignant expression, attempted to ward off the appalling suspicion: but what were his feelings, when she announced his real birth, and that no close ties of blood united him with the fascinating idol of his adora-

tion ! Happiness so unexpected rendered him almost frantic ; this tremendous barrier removed, all else faded before it ; and if he had been assured of receiving the hand of the beloved Susan the next day at the altar, scarcely could his ecstasy have been greater.

Secrecy, as far as respected every other individual, was strictly enjoined by his new-found friend ; and having obtained leave of absence under plea of indisposition, which was a very feasible pretext, for much was he altered in appearance, he returned to London.

The health of lady Susan had rapidly declined ; a warmer climate had been recommended, and the German Spa the place of destination. This had been the report of his still dear and firm friend, Henry Edgcombe, who also hinted a suspicion, which had gained ground with his relations, of an attachment between his sister and their friend, constant visitor, and intimate from boyish days, the young Fairfax ; and concluded

cluded by acknowledging, that he believed this impression on the minds of his parents had hurried the preparations for their leaving England, although the exact time had not yet been fixed.

Oswald was received, on his arrival in town, with great kindness and cordiality by the heads of the family ; his evident indisposition offered too good support to his assertions, to be doubted ; and the house of lord Somerton again became his head-quarters. On the first opportunity which presented itself, he now made known to the dear possessor of his heart his recent knowledge of his real birth, and candidly and honourably added all the hoard of annexed disadvantages ; but the enthusiastic Susan saw, felt none of them ; all she remembered was, that her adored Oswald truly loved her, and might become her own by every tie divine and human.

Rank, birth, and fortune, all united, weighed as nothing in the scale, she indulged in such romantic scenes of a blissful future ;

future; and it required the full exertion of all her circumspection, to avoid a discovery of the joyful sensations which now pervaded her breast, as they burst forth like a long-suppressed torrent. The ratification of the preliminaries of peace between England and France at this period was consummated; and the regiment of Oswald proving one of the many disbanded on that event, he was unexpectedly enabled to accompany the earl and countess, who, with their youngest son, lady Susan, and suite, embarked from England, and arrived in safety at their destined port.

Bevan was, from necessity, become the confidante of the lovers; and these imprudent young people freely indulged in stolen, though innocent interviews. From this dream of delight, they were aroused by the recall of Oswald to join a regiment, to which he had been appointed on the renewal of hostilities between the neighbouring powers: the health of lady Susan, during her residence abroad, had returned
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but slowly ; and this dreaded separation was looked forward to with dismay. The effect was soon visible, and a serious relapse to the fair invalid was the consequence. Oswald pressed to receive her hand ere he quitted her, dreading the means which might be used during his uncertain absence to disunite them, as he already saw, with agony, a powerful rival in the amiable duke of Braganza. Lady Susan, on the other hand, convinced of the impossibility of its taking place in London, consented to become his ere he quitted Germany ; and finding it impracticable to effect the accomplishment of their scheme without the knowledge of her brother Henry, and making a virtue of necessity, communicated to him the whole.

Shocked at their imprudent and hazardous plan, the estimable Henry painted, with all the eloquence of truth and affectionate interest, the dangers with which such a scheme was pregnant ; but vainly was the voice of Reason exerted, when
opposed

opposed to the despotic influence of Love; the dictates of Prudence were disregarded, they appeared but as feathers in the scale, when counterpoised by her sole argument, their strong and mutual attachment; but Henry did not relinquish his hopes of success, until the agitated and exhausted Susan fainted in his arms. Unwillingly convinced that the pending evil was unavoidable, he reluctantly agreed to be present at the nuptial benediction; and having acquiesced, rather than consented, to become father to the bride, they were married.

Some few hours after the ceremony, he enclosed the certificate, properly attested, in a sealed envelope previously prepared, directed by the clergyman, and addressed for lady Susan. Entering the drawing-room with it incautiously in his hand, he very unexpectedly encountered the earl, instead of her he sought; his evident embarrassment, extreme confusion, and sudden attempt to conceal the packet, unavoidably

avoidably and naturally excited the attention of his lordship, who, glancing his eyes on the superscription, saw clearly the name of lady Susan : an epistolary correspondence between a brother and sister under the same roof, was not to be imagined ; and, having always entertained a suspicion that Henry Edgecombe favoured the supposed pretensions of Fairfax, he fiercely demanded, in an authoritative tone, the instant delivery of the packet to him. A compliance was impossible : in vain did the distressed son endeavour to evade the request ; suspicion was now converted into certainty ; the earl was peremptory : at length, enraged almost to madness, and foiled in every means he had adopted, he had recourse to one as a last expedient, which he felt assured could not fail of success ; he ordered his son instantly to quit both his house and his presence, nor ever more presume to obtrude on either, if within one hour he did not deliver into his hands *that very packet*.

Poor

Poor Henry essayed every means in his power to avert the threatened evil; and by the most solemn asseverations, asserted that it contained neither a line from or of the dreaded Fairfax; and by these unguarded expressions, tacitly confessed his knowledge of the contents. The infuriated earl was now no longer master of himself; and his son, compelled to save himself from still further humiliation, precipitately quitted the house, without being permitted to take leave of either his mother or sister, dreading the malediction which hovered on the lips of his father.

The next day he wrote to his friend Oswald, who instantly obeyed the summons; they mutually lamented the unfortunate altercation which had taken place; and with all the anguish of poignant grief, Edmund deplored that the present state of health of lady Susan forbade the possibility of averting from the head of her brother the rage of lord Somerton, as she was so debilitated from long suffering, as
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to be wholly unequal to support that storm which would inevitably ensue, and by a disclosure of circumstances, overwhelm her in ruin and in death; they therefore reluctantly resolved, as the most judicious measure that they could now adopt, to wait in silence the issue of a few months, when they hoped to see her mind restored to comparative tranquillity, by a certainty that no event, save the hand of Heaven itself, could dissolve the link which bound her to her beloved Edmund, would accelerate her recovery, and returning strength enable her to sustain, without present danger, a discovery to her family of the imprudent connexion she had recently formed.

But alas! time, so far from producing the expected salutary effect, only involved them still deeper in distress, for the consequences of this inconsiderate marriage now threatened a premature disclosure. At this important crisis, public affairs put on a very serious aspect; every English
family

family precipitately quitted the continent, and among the last was the noble family of Somerton : as conveyances were now become so dangerous, as well as of the most serious consequence in case of delay, Oswald proposed that his friend Edgecombe should endeavour to gain admission on board the same ship as an invalid English seaman, and, by offering a trifle for his passage, escape suspicion.

This was at once arranged, and upon application, he was admitted. Little now remains for us to explain, except that Henry knew not of the situation of his sister, until the visit we have mentioned Mrs. Bevan paid him: distracted by a dread of discovery under present critical circumstances, he nobly smothered the ardent passion he had conceived for Agnes, or suffered it to prey, as he supposed, on himself alone, rather than risque the involvement of an innocent girl in irremediable misery, bearing but too constantly in view the effects he had already seen, and the consequences for the future,

future, which he dreaded to anticipate, in the fatal issue of a concealed union, amid the additional aggravations of attendant poverty. But fearful lest the estimable qualities and many attractions of Oswald should prove equally irresistible to the heart of Agnes, as they had fatally been to that of his sister, unacquainted as she was, and must remain, of his already plighted faith, he penned, in fearful dread, the warning letter we have given in a former part of this work, to guard her, if possible, from apprehended danger, which his jealous fears had almost realized.

The crisis of Henry Edgecombe's fate, however, now approached; the marriage of Oswald and lady Susan must soon be announced, and the consequences to all parties at once ascertained. A letter was sent off express to the new-made father, and, taking charge himself of the infant, he proceeded with it as directed by the useful Mrs. Bevan; but having placed it in the arms of a nurse, went on himself to
Plymouth,

Plymouth, where the regiment of Oswald had been stationed: arrived there, he, to his no small distress, found they had sailed the preceding day for Ireland: to Ireland he therefore hastened, that they might, by a personal discussion of recent events and probable consequences, arrange the best plans they could mutually be enabled to adjust, to soften the resentment of the haughty earl, remove the beloved invalid from the reach of his reproaches, and, if possible, restore the banished son to parental favour.

In Dublin, Henry encountered lord Creswell, who had yet lingered in that city, in the fervent hope of obtaining the means of conversing with Agnes on the subject of the death of his own unfortunate wife, since whose loss he had plunged into that dissipation which had, by progressive steps, debased his heart, and depraved his mind into a sensual libertinism, that in early life formed no trait in his character; although his passions had at all times been
violent

violent and unrestrained, still he was then capable of feeling the purity of a legitimate attachment; and the lovely, ill-fated Theresa had been too soon lost to him, for him to have become weary of the mistress, although in the trammels of matrimony. His love was at the zenith of its effervescence, when the object voluntarily banished herself from the arms of a doating husband, and thus widowed the bridal days of fond delight. The senses of lord Creswell had since acknowledged the passing influence of many a *chère amie*; but his heart participated not in that gallantry to which he became devoted; and the captivating Theresa yet tenderly lived in the memory of the libertine.

He greeted Edgecombe with a cordiality which he little expected, as Creswell had heretofore appeared to adopt that resentment the family preserved on past events; but in fact, at the present moment, he wished for a counselling friend, and in vain had sought among his numerous dissolute companions

companions for one whom he might select for that purpose, when his long-estranged brother accidentally presented the very being so ardently desired ; his reason was satisfied at the election, and his better feelings gratified at the rencounter ; but we must also acknowledge, that abandoned habits had divested his lordship of that acute delicacy which would, under similar circumstances, have operated with his brother, by discovering himself to his confidant in the unworthy light in which he certainly appeared in seeking aid, counsel, and friendship of him, who, when considered useless, had been wholly neglected and forgotten, though suffering under mental distress of a nature so serious as banishment from the heart and presence of his parent. But the amiable Edgecombe freely forgave the past, in what he now imagined the disinterested acknowledgment of error in his brother ; and only felt gratified in the renewal of amity, by a full impression that Creswell had exhibited a
more

more noble trait of character than he had given him credit for, in thus avowing himself self-convicted, and conscious of having acted wrong.

The confidential communications of his lordship ensued, correct in all particulars, save that which related to Agnes; for upon discovering that she was an object of deepest interest to Edgecombe, which was but too apparent, from involuntary exclamations, and agitated manner, whenever she was introduced into the conversation, he adroitly varnished the relation of his own conduct, as connected with herself, relying upon the generosity of her disposition not to betray him; and concluded with informing him of her altered prospects, in the friendship and protection of Mrs. Maitland.

Overjoyed at having discovered her present asylum, and that they were now actually inhabitants of the same city, he readily promised his brother to exert himself, as far as delicacy and propriety would permit, to obtain all particulars relative to the

unhappy nun of St. Jago; nor, in the hour of Love's ardent emotion at the intelligence received, ever thought of mentioning to his lordship the comfortable independence with which he had been presented, by his appointment to a lucrative situation, obtained for him through the successfully exerted interest of his kind and considerate friend, lord Leslie.

Need we add, that the gifts of Fortune were at this moment truly desirable to him, since he had now the ability to avow his ardent and long-concealed attachment for the young Portuguese, without entangling her yet more cruelly in the miseries of penury and want? He lost not an hour, therefore, in seeking the object of his affections; but, amid all his happiness in the modestly avowed declaration of reciprocal affection, the generous Henry yet remembered the anxieties of his brother, and delicately touched on the subject.

Miss Dursley now conceived it doubly necessary that Edgecombe should be made acquainted

acquainted with the connexion which subsisted between herself and the hapless lord Creswell; and having, without difficulty, obtained the permission and concurrence of Mrs. Maitland, the circumstances of past events were elucidated, as far as concerned the fate of the *religieuse*.

Henrietta was no sooner acquainted with the matrimonial overtures tendered by Mr. Edgecombe, than she avowed her intention to bestow on her affectionate and attentive Agnes a small independent property, by way of marriage portion, declaring her now to be the only claimant on her heart and fortune, that the ravages of time and circumstance had left her.

The mind of lord Creswell was deeply affected by the melancholy memoir of his beloved Theresa; and at the moment when the ruder passions were hushed, and his better feelings awakened, he offered to become an intercessor with the earl of Somerton, on behalf of his discarded brother; and as the influence of his lordship

was unbounded with both his parents, no doubt could be entertained of success, particularly if permission were granted him to mention the long-concealed connexion which united their own family with that of Agnes, who being of noble extraction, and the bar of poverty now also removed, would, his lordship imagined, with some little exertion on his part, be received as the bride-elect of the honourable Henry Edgcombe.

Matters being thus arranged, it now became necessary that the brothers should return to England, in order to carry their projected scheme into effect; but a heavy calamity awaited their arrival in London; for they learned the melancholy intelligence of the death of poor lady Susan Oswald, who had previously revealed the whole sad history of the past, and in the hour of Death's appalling horrors, had already extorted from her father a promise of full forgiveness, both of her husband and brother.

Three

Three months after the marriage of Henry Edgcombe with his estimable and beloved Agnes was consummated, Henrietta announced her resolution, from which no argument could deter her, of returning to her native country, and which even the terrors of war could not counteract; the young couple, therefore, accompanied her to the sea-port, from whence she embarked for Portugal.

Captain Oswald's regiment had, in the interim, been dispatched on foreign service; and his child was committed to the tender care of Mr. and Mrs. Edgcombe, who, with genuine sorrow and regret, separated from the afflicted disconsolate mourner, yet trusting that change of scene, co-operating with that active life inseparably connected with his profession, would in time soften the despairing anguish of the youthful widower, and that he would return to feel all the dear consolation of filial tenderness and rising virtues in his blooming boy.

CHAP. XIII.

Where is the breast 'of iron mould,
Stern, inaccessible, and cold,
Which melts not when its proud distress
Is balm'd by Pity's gentleness?
It pierces through the warrior's steel,
His cares to sooth, his wounds to heal;
It creeps into the rankling heart,
And if it cures not, lulls the smart.
All is not lost, if by our side
One faithful lingerer fondly stays;
But Life's dark waste, so wild and wide,
Seems lessened on our gaze.
'Tis sweet on some familiar face,
The mild reflected tear to trace;
And Sympathy's responding sigh
Is music to the frozen ear of Misery.

WALLACE.

The grateful Friend.

AGNES having thus completed the minutia
of her little history, now felt how grateful
to

to her heart was the opportunity afforded her, in some measure, by actions, to evince her sense of past benefits received from the kind interposition of Florence, on her behalf, in her day of trial; and, with genuine delight, made known her arrangements to receive her friend beneath her own roof as a sister. But though the heart of Florence leapt with transport at the conviction that here her friendship had indeed been well founded, yet she recoiled from the dependent state in which she should be placed, by acceding to the wishes of Mrs. Edgecombe; she therefore made her acknowledgments, but at the same time hinted at the necessity of deliberation, ere a matter so important could be concluded on, and also the propriety of a consultation with Mrs. Wilson, to whom she had actually engaged herself for many months forward; and, resisting the offer of Agnes for an interference on her part, after an airing of two hours, she was set down at her own abode, promising to write her friend the

result at an early hour of the following day ; and having communicated to her all the particulars connected with major Bentinck, she had kindly undertaken that the unopened letter should be returned, in a way and manner consistent with that delicacy due to the amiable Ellen.

This matter removed from her mind, she sought the benevolent Mrs. Wilson ; and partly stating present circumstances, was instantly released from the committal of her time, by the good woman's observing, that as the summer was now fast approaching, the town would become empty, and her employers being absent, would leave considerable leisure on her hands, while the work intended for that season to be accomplished by Miss Vincent, would be accepted with avidity by many others.

Florence now retired to her humble chamber, on the second story of Mrs. Wilson's little dwelling, and from thence addressed the promised letter to Mrs. Edgecombe. She with unfeigned thankfulness
acknowledged

acknowledged the kind and affectionate proposals on her behalf; but at the same time candidly confessed an infirmity of her nature, if such it could be called, but which she herself termed the only surviving spark of objectionable pride she was conscious of, that adversity had not destroyed; but that her whole soul so completely revolted from the very shade of idle dependence; that she felt it would be impossible so far to conquer it, as to ensure happiness upon those terms, even with so dear a friend; but that if her conditions were acquiesced in, that of total silence on this one subject, she would readily meet her wishes of spending some time with her as a visitor, and would be prepared to attend her, any day that would suit her convenience:

The answer, Mrs. Edgecombe made in person, and acquiesced in her terms without hesitation, in the fervent hope that she should succeed in the completion of her own, when the irresistible eloquence of

her loved Henry should unite with her own endeavours. These two amiable women then repaired together to the temporary home of Agnes; and here did the happy wife present to each other the two dearest beings to her on earth.

In the course of the evening, Florence inquired whether any account had ever yet been received of Benedicta?

“ Ah, poor Benedicta,” repeated Mrs. Edgcombe, smiling, “ my rival heroine through so many trying scenes, must not be now lost in the background of the piece; she is here, and under the direction of Mrs. Hanson, my valued old friend at the lodge of Trent Abbey, is endeavouring to render herself useful in an establishment of English servants; my dear Henry has found employment for both, and Benedicta as yet superintends the nursery of our young charge. But to return to her adventures.

“ The honesty of my poor foreigner became suspected, when she offered for sale

sale the really beautiful production of our joint labours, during so many tedious weeks, for a price so much beneath its actual value; but as such articles of traffic on the continent of Europe are chiefly the produce of the secluded sisterhood of convents, whose wants being few, they are usually disposed of at a price very far below what such articles could be manufactured for in London, as *time* in the one place is scarcely taken into the account, and in the other it becomes a principal; these considerations were certainly not thought of by either of us; and the *marchandes des modes* of this metropolis rightly concluding that no individual could be maintained by the profits arising from such sales, naturally questioned the trembling vendor, with a strictness that each moment increased her alarm: these appearances were unhappily but a confirmation to surmise; and the terrified Benedicta was detained on suspicion of dishonesty.

“ Early the next morning, officers of
N 6 justice

justice were dispatched with a warrant, to search the house of which she declared herself an inhabitant, a house which had long been suspected; but as no *proof* appeared, of which the law admitted, an investigation had hitherto never been attempted.

“ This corroborating circumstance, however, of stolen goods, or such as in their estimation were so, allowed a fair pretence, which was caught at with avidity. On their arrival at Mr. Dobson’s, he was absent, and the tears and entreaties of the terrified wife were now of no avail; the door of the mysterious room was thrown open by magisterial authority, in the form of a search warrant; and several dead bodies, in the habiliments of the grave, announced their occupation at once to be attached to that horrid and sacrilegious fraternity, known by the appellation of *resurrection people*, who, under covert of the dark, invade the hallowed sanctuaries of the dead, compelling from the grave its peaceful

peaceful inhabitant, and traffic with anatomists for the unnatural merchandize. The infamous gang of midnight and profane depredators were by these means committed to the hands of outraged justice. But what were the feelings of horror and dismay which assailed my poor innocent Benedicta, at the strange intelligence of the disappearance of her mistress! her grief was loud and clamorous, which soon produced the usual effect; and she was at length silenced by exhaustion; and ultimately was given to understand, that she was fully committed for trial, with her friends, the Dobsons.

“ With horror my wretched Portuguese heard she was not only charged with theft, without the smallest prospect of defending herself, but also as an accomplice with the other inhabitants of the house, near Brentford, in the depredations committed on the last asylum of mortality; and the unhappy victim of suspicion had been actually the inmate of a loathsome prison for some months,

months, when she heard of a fellow-sufferer and countryman, who had just been brought under the same roof for debt. She implored for the liberty of seeing him; and the request was immediately granted, when the unfortunate man proved to be a helper to the grooms at the stables of the duke of Braganza.

“ That well-known name produced an electric shock upon the frame of Benedicta; she shrieked with joy; and, having gained a particular direction, lost no time in conveying a letter to his grace; for the date of his acquaintance with her took its rise while yet in the nursery, where, at that period, she had been an assistant. Her appeal was immediately answered; the condescending duke rejoiced at again beholding, and being enabled to benefit, an attendant on his early youth, in poverty and misery in a foreign land; he caused her to be released, and committed to the care of his housekeeper. And lastly, the adventures of poor Benedicta were wound up,
in

in my being traced out by the faithful creature, through the family of lord Somerton ; here, you will not doubt, she has at length found a happy asylum ; and here, my dear Florence, she will, most likely, pass the remainder of her days."

CHAP. XIV.

“ Be ours, when evening’s pensive shadows haste
O’er the dark trees, and paler lawn, to bind
Contentment’s modest wreath around the brows
Of wedded love, that sighing, oft renews
The memory of its fondly-stored vows;
Or, smiling on the day o’erpast, reviews
Each joy the wife—the mother can impart,
To rivet in esteem the husband’s heart.”

*Fancy quits our present “ INHABITANTS OF
EARTH,” and weary of “ THE FOLLIES OF
WOMAN,” takes wing to seek other scenes.*

RECEIVED into the Edgecombe family, Florence felt some traces of her former spirits revive ; for affection, greeting her sensitive heart, reanimated the long-dormant pulse

pulse of native hilarity; while change of air recruited her health, and the unremitting care and assiduity of the amiable Agnes to divert her mind, and by constant employment, prevent its dwelling too long on the painful occurrences of the past, proved the most salutary elixir to invigorate her drooping frame.

But ah! how different were now the feelings of the contrite Bentinck, the victim of ungoverned passion! he had transferred his professions of affection, in the first paroxysm of resentment; and pride alone had supported through its consequences, to the fulfilment of a lasting engagement; but alas! the sight of the still-beloved Florence, on the memorable night of civil commotion, had subdued his boasted firmness; and the letter, then written, had been a cruel constraint on his feelings, he with difficulty commanded; still he could not stoop again to sue the woman who once had spurned him; he could not descend to purchase the hand of her he loved,

loved, while her heart might exclaim—

“ My poverty, but not my will, consents!”

yet he felt the temerity would be too great that would lead him to trust his resolves in her presence, sensible as he was of the weak devotion of his attachment, and that his honour stood committed to the *world* for the fulfilment of his engagement with Ellen Bertie. To Leslie then he confided the precious trust of befriending the unfortunate girl; for he was, of all mankind, the being he least feared taking advantage of the circumstance which threw a lovely and indigent female on his protection and humanity.

From his disinterested benevolence, he believed Miss Vincent might fearlessly receive that assistance which, from himself, might perhaps appear too equivocal to meet her acceptance, at least, through his friend he should still hear of her; and vainly did the irritated lover seek to persuade himself that he wished for ever to
annihilate

annihilate all traces of an inconstant capricious mistress. Once, however, become a husband, and by such means placing it beyond his own power to bow the slave of coquetry, he suffered his heart to dwell on remembrance too dangerous for such a disposition as his to indulge with impunity.

He turned from his cold and frigid wife with apathy equal to her own; and the long-discarded picture of Florence, which by stratagem and bribery he had obtained of an artist, who had copied it from one drawn for her father, had again become the fostered companion of his bosom; he reconciled himself to the indulgence of gazing on it, with the idea that, having summoned sufficient resolution to place an insuperable barrier between them, he might with impunity enjoy this slender consolation, while, with the contradictory folly of the lover, he plunged into dissipation, to banish that image he treasured near his heart.

Leslie had communicated to him his reception

ception at the house of Mrs. Benson, and the failure of information he had hoped to gather of the destination of her persecuted lodger, as invectives alone were offered as replies to his interrogatories: this intelligence he had freely conveyed; but, in fact, if the wished-for address had been given, it was very far from his lordship's intention to have put Horace in possession of it; for although he was ready to give full credit to his assertions of respectful attention to the hapless orphan, and his determination to restrain his feelings within the most rigid boundaries of discretion, yet he did not so highly appreciate the firmness of his character, as to be as entirely assured of his ability to preserve that line of conduct he had chalked out for himself: in fact, there was not much of coalescing ingredients in the characters of the two young men; circumstance, rather than any other cause, had associated them in bonds of intimacy, rather than friendship, which had been drawn somewhat closer than would otherwise

otherwise probably have happened, by Horace having placed his lordship in the situation of a confidant, and by professions of esteem and regard, that had naturally excited in his generous bosom the sentiment of gratitude. These were therefore the ties which united them. But lord Leslie, in reality, feared for the stability of Bentinck's resolves, when placed in opposition to the most fervent passion of the human mind, and had consequently determined to spare him the cruel struggle, by himself affording all that succour and aid which friendship could have dictated from those refined sentiments inhabiting the breast of a man of honour.

Major Bentinck now persuaded himself he was only acting a benevolent part, in the researches in which he was yet employed to discover the retreat of the object of his affections; and it was not until she was so unexpectedly and suddenly thrown in his way a dependant being, that he discovered his passions were not sufficiently

ciently subjugated to the dominion of either honour or reason, to resist temptation when thus assailed, or suffer opportunity wholly to escape; and by so doing, gave fatal proof of all the selfishness of love, divested of its generosity, in seeking to lure the friendless orphan from the paths of principle and virtue. But although truth forbids us to shield the libertine intention, the manner would not have been so indecorous and abrupt, if Horace had indeed been, as Florence had observed, master of his reason. She was right. Copious libations to the god of wine, under the influence of that of love, had considerably clouded the native delicacy of their votary; and he was himself scarcely conscious how far he had outraged the boundaries of propriety, on the memorable evening he had accompanied her he loved to the house of Mrs. Wilson. But when the next day beheld the fulfilment of an engagement he entertained no doubt would, at all events, have been evaded, and this aided by
unexpected

unexpected opportunity, hope became renovated; and the full tide of ecstasy, which rushed upon his heart, scarcely admitted a doubt of eventual success.

Elate with expectation, he impatiently waited the dismissal of the servants. The dinner-hour was the most tedious he had ever passed; in vain he attempted to partake of the dishes placed before him; hunger obeyed not the invitation, as they were successively removed and replaced; while Florence, unconsciously wrapt in painful reverie, saw not that by rejecting food, his frequent application to the champaign took double effect; for as the crisis of his fate approached, he thus attempted to replenish, by artificial aid, the desertion of his natural spirits; verifying the assertion, that

“Conscience makes cowards of us all!”

To this destructive enemy of Reason, the insidious grape, Bentinck too soon had fatal recourse; while his temper, always ungoverned,

ungoverned, became additionally irritable, by a disappointment of those sanguine hopes he had cherished in a connexion with a passionate attachment. Home consequently became either a scene of listless enervating apathy, or of fretful discord to poor Ellen; while this unhappy, discontented couple appear to exemplify through life, those natural evils which result from marriages contracted under the reprehensible influence of turbulent resentment.

A far different scene was exhibited in the peaceful dwelling of the Edgecombes, who enjoyed that endearing confidence which, springing from reciprocal love, united to reciprocal esteem, gives to conjugal life those fascinations that constitute a domestic Elysium:

The morning storm appeared to have passed over their heads, and left a brilliant expanse, on which their meridian sun shone with unwonted lustre; the splendid refulgence reflected on the cloud that enfolded the fortunes of Florence; and, like
the

the happy signal of the ark's preservation, the sun of the happy destiny of Agnes glittered on the tearful gloom of that of the orphan as the rainbow of hope. Such are the magic powers of friendship, such the reward of benevolence! Coquetry, folly, and extravagance, had, in the hour of affliction, been the scorpions to sting the bosom which had nourished them; but that first of Christian virtues, disinterested humanity, exercised towards a hapless fellow-being, had indeed realized the Shakesperian attributes of mercy, in being twice blessed—

"It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes!"

There is an elasticity in the spirits of youth, which renders present enjoyment the anodyne of former sorrow; still Florence shrank from a survey of the future; for however she might hush the pains of memory, yet the pleasures of hope were not for her.

The line of life which reason and propriety

priety marked out for our orphan, was a painful and depressing one; she knew herself adapted for a far different sphere; and she could not assimilate her ideas, manners, and inclinations, to that in which she was thrown by adventitious circumstance. She considered herself as an isolated being, when surrounded by the companions with whom she had lately associated: the frivolities and extravagancies of elevated life, she now viewed with meet insignificance; but she could not regard its refinements as lightly, or as philosophically; she gave to them a consequence, which will be naturally attached in the eyes of those who have been born, educated, and received in a certain intellectual elevation of society; but whether from lingering folly, or something less reprehensible, we leave for general opinion to decide. Miss Vincent certainly sighed over the privation of fortune, as the means of having humbled her to the rough-hewn walks of unpolished life; but if this be deemed a continuation
of

of the errors of our heroine, we presume not to enter on her vindication; we merely mean to pourtray her as an *inhabitant of earth*, and who, among its members, can justly lay claim to perfection?

Yes, Florence could, and did applaud, esteem and regard Mrs. Wilson for her many amiable qualities; but still she could not greet in her the intimate companion, or counselling confiding friend; her conversation was too illiterate and confined, to afford her either interest or instruction; while her well-meant, kind-hearted advice, or busy attentions, failed in that delicacy which was so essentially necessary to sooth a mind tenderly alive to all those refinements she had heretofore been accustomed to enjoy; she was truly grateful for the motives from which they originated; but their effects rather fatigued than consoled.

Far different was the friendship of Mrs. Edgecombe, who possessed that winning softness, which wipes the tear of sorrow, and nurtures the languid smile; her mind

could now, with endearing confidence, rest on the sympathetic interest of this faithful consoler. But over the friendship of Leslie she dared not suffer the fascinations of memory to range; her subdued heart tremblingly acknowledged the recollection; each pulse sweetly vibrated to the flattering idea, that she had been an object of interest to Ferdinand, even when no longer considered as *the chosen of his friend*.

But if, amid the vainest moments of propitious fortune, sanguine hope had never dared point at the conquest of a heart exalted and elevated as his, how cheerless was now that bosom which, awakened to a sense of its own temerity, felt itself unworthy even to inshrine the image of one so supremely excellent! yet this being, Miss Vincent was soon to behold beneath the same roof with herself. His expected visit was daily spoken of by the Edgecombes, and attended by those expressions of anticipated gratification, that flowing eloquently

quently from the heart, were but further corroboratives of the estimation and regard with which this superior young man was considered by friends capable of appreciating his worth.

Yet prepared as she was for his arrival, the most blooming roseate of health could not have rivalled the vivid blush which crossed the cheeks of Florence, as she beheld herself in the presence of him on whose virtues she had recently been so inclined to dwell, before him who had penetrated her character in the days of folly, whom evident personal admiration could not blind to the far more important features of mind ; and if in the hours of proud elation the conscious beauty recoiled with timid fear from the scrutinizing examination of the sportively satirizing, but judicious Leslie, how much more reason had she now to dread the fiat of his investigation, when, sensible of her own manifold imperfections, she no longer surveyed herself in the mir-

ror of a flattering world, but the homely glass of *truth* !

In vain did the Edgecombes, on remarking the assiduous attentions of their noble guest, laugh and rally her on her conquest, or gaily smile at her preparations for returning to the humble roof of Mrs. Wilson. Florence would not, could not, dared not embrace the dear idea of being beloved by Leslie ; she trembled lest they should reflect some sparks of their sanguine hopes to her desolated bosom ; for she believed that, unless supported by a delusive anchor, she had yet the ability to conquer that love she was conscious struggled for supremacy ; but that if it once gained dominion, the recent glimmerings of content must vanish for ever from her view ; for she was well convinced that an attachment, founded on esteem, and almost adoration of the virtues of its object, could be no transient sentiment, such as the thoughtless wish of admiration excited by the attractive form

form and face, the vivacious *agremens* of a ball-room flirt ; the handsome, the elegant, and energetic Bentinck, was well calculated to dazzle the eyes, inflame the heart, and fascinate the imagination of a coquette ; while Leslie could command even reason into alliance with love, and unite in that sentiment all the nobler feelings of the soul.

But lost in her own self-abasement, Florence saw not the material alteration which had likewise taken place in lord Leslie. In early life his character had been strongly marked with eccentricity, perhaps the more pardonable from the singular habits of his father, under whose immediate eye he had been reared, having been taught to distrust all mankind, from the deceptive mask the earl had experienced to have been assumed by that world with whom he had associated : he, with reluctance, renounced the ingenuous pleasures of childhood, for the artificial enjoyments of maturer life, where he was led to expect neither that

candour nor sincerity, which were the most cherished virtues of his own breast.

But when Ferdinand was first introduced at Trent Abbey, struck by the beauty and talents of Florence, of which he feared his heart would become but too susceptible, he endeavoured to accustom himself to regard them only as beacons to warn him of his danger; he was almost immediately after the elected confidant of Bentinck; he saw him entangled in the wiles of coquetry; and he trembled, lest it was but an anticipation of his own fate, until convinced, as he believed, that it was assumed but as a flimsy veil to conceal her real partiality for the ill-treated Horace; he then almost despised her, as he beheld these superior endowments prostituted to such an unworthy purpose; but still conceiving that the mind and affections of such a creature were treasures the world could not elsewhere unite, when divested of their meretricious garb, he nobly laboured to secure their happiness, at the expence of his own.

The

The epithet affixed by the female *quizzers* of fashion in London, attendant on his first *debut*, he wished to confirm, as it afforded him the opportunity of claiming privileges, which, unauthorized, he dared not otherwise assume among the juvenile group of Staffordshire; and, wrapt in the mantle of sportive eccentricity, which his youth and recluse habits had, until within the last few months tolerated, if they did not sanction, he indulged all the whimsical conceits excited by an exuberant flow of spirits, and a happy playfulness of disposition, that, united to fanciful enthusiasm, gave peculiar complexion to his manner and conversation, of which, on further intercourse with society, and its established forms, he became aware of the necessity of restraining within more rational and customary limits, while he now just retained a sufficient portion to give attractive animation and energetic eloquence to his words and actions.

But

But heart-cheering was the conviction, that the bosom of Florence was freed from its former influence, that love for Bentinck had with her been but a passing admiration and momentary delusion, that her follies and errors had undergone the severe chastisement of adversity's torpedian touch, that she had stood unsubdued amid the wreck of fortune, and her virtues, like the asbestos of ancient day, had enfolded and preserved her from the contamination of vice, when forsaken, poor, dependent, and insulted ! for lord Leslie had not been made a confidant by halves, he had heard from the major the whole of his unworthy conduct, who, with all the appearance of that contrition he really felt, had implored the interference of his lordship, if only, through him, to grant a pardon for the past, upon a solemn assurance that he would never more transgress ; but Ferdinand would have regretted that the woman he loved could have entered into such a negociation

negociation with any man, and therefore coldly declined an interference, though he assigned not the operating influence.

The character of Miss Vincent, thus cleared of the dross which had heretofore obscured its brilliance, shone in his eyes with additional lustre, and the influence of her superior beauty and native talents, his heart had early acknowledged. From the earl of Trelawney he feared not opposition, for he had been also a close observer of the rise and progress of his affection; and the resemblance and relationship of Florence to his beloved Marianne Fitz-Arnold, had rendered her an object of interest and unwonted favour to himself. He had, however, never ceased to warn lord Leslie, for he had seen his danger, before he was himself apprised of its extent; but at the same time assured him, that if the attachment should become mutual, and the demands of honour be satisfied in her relinquishment of major Bentinck, his concurrence in all that could promote his felicity, would be
most

most readily accorded ; for his own heart had too severely felt the tortures of disappointed affection, to entail the possibility of similar anguish on that of a beloved and amiable child ; all he asked in return for this indulgence was, deliberation and circumspection on his part ; and that he would in no manner commit himself in any engagement of this nature, without first consulting him on the subject, with a candid and full avowal of all connected with the object of his election, as father and son had, from the earliest period of memory in the latter, been rather affectionate friends, than distanced in confidence by their nearness of connexion ; and if this were oftener the case, we should not so frequently witness the miseries which arise from family discord.

Thus authorized by paternal clemency, the estimable Ferdinand hesitated no longer to avow the wishes of his breast, and named our heroine as their object, entering into a minute discussion of the past, as it related

ted

ted to the rise and progress of his love. The earl heard him with all a father's interest; but not like most worldly fathers did he comment on the theme, for instead of reverting to the serious grievance of the loss of fortune and failure of early brilliant prospects which had befallen Miss Vincent, he very cordially congratulated his son on having made choice of a female, who, like himself, having experienced the wily hypocrisy of general profession and the deceptions of fashionable regard, would now the more amply estimate the rare blessing of disinterested affection, when bestowed by a husband.

A father's benediction and interest accompanied the young and ardent candidate for the heart and hand of our heroine; while the so-lately-desolate orphan had cause to thank the fate which had decreed her to pass through the painful ordeal of adversity, since it had been the means of rendering her deserving of the affections
of

of that being who, of all her young companions, had ever claimed the greatest portion of her esteem, respect, and admiration; the consciousness of whose survey had, in the giddiest moments of vain prosperity, awed her follies, and mellowed the volatility of her manner—with whom coquetry feared to engage, and even shrank from view—the being whose friendship and regard had never been displayed without touching her heart with the soft emotion of grateful delight, at being considered an object of attention to a mind so exalted.

Florence, the chastized, the corrected child of misfortune, had now to experience another vicissitude in the drama of life; and in the sacred character of a wife, loving and beloved, she will not, we trust, be wholly lost amid “THE INHABITANTS OF EARTH;” but that her observant judges, with clemency and humanity, will survey the little incidents of her eventful course; and not too severely arraign the perhaps
unavoidable

unavoidable errors appertaining to "THE
FOLLIES OF WOMAN."

"Be not to her frailty severe,
Nor take from her virtue its due,
For the vow of her lip was sincere,
And the sigh of her bosom was true."

FINIS.

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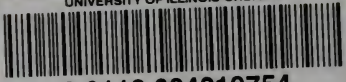
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